

Travel motivation among cross border tourists: Case study of Langkawi

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ABSTRACT

Research that focuses on regional tourists in Malaysia is scarce in literature. This study examined the influence of travel motivations; economic, nature, and cultural aspects on tourists' loyalty intention in the context of Langkawi Island, Malaysia. A total of 200 fully answered questionnaires were collected from ASEAN tourists on the island using the purposive sampling technique, and the data were analyzed using the structural equation modeling technique. The results confirmed that the 'economic aspect' and 'nature aspect' are important motivational factors affecting tourists' loyalty intention to revisit Langkawi. Although cultural aspect influences loyalty intention, its effect was weak. Managerial and marketing recommendations were made for tourism in Langkawi based on these findings.

1. Introduction

Tourism is a major GDP contributor for Malaysia. It is estimated that the tourism industry contributed 13.4% (USD41.9 billion) to the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2017 (WTTC, 2018a) from 25.9 million tourist arrivals in 2017 (Mansor, 2018). Malaysia's tourism industry is experiencing high movements of inbound foreign tourists due to favorable exchange rates and lower prices, and also the fact that it borders several nations; Thailand in the north and Singapore in the south of Peninsular Malaysia, and Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia in East Malaysia (Chong, 2016). Due to its proximity to those countries, ~68.7% of tourists entered Malaysia by land, as it shares several border crossings with Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, and Indonesia, while only ~28.4% of tourists entered via airports, and ~3% through seaports (ASEANUP, 2018).

Despite Malaysia's strong annual tourism from cross-border tourists, past studies have yet to examine the influence of travel motivations on tourist's loyalty intention to revisit a destination within the cross-border context. Generally, cross-border tourists travel from neighboring countries and stay for a short time to enjoy the travel and tourism experience as opposed to long-haul tourists (del Río, Agüera, Cuadra, & Morales, 2017). Tourists' motivations to visit a destination may vary from experiencing adventure to appreciating nature, while others cross-borders for medical reasons i.e. to get a better, affordable treatment outside of their respective countries (Turner, 2008). Often, cross-border

tourism has been given limited attention, despite it being a significant economic revenue for the government. For example, a long-standing tradition of mainland Chinese tourists to shop in Hong Kong has forced the Chinese government to increase the tariff of some products to reduce cross-border shopping of its citizens (Pham, Peng, & Chen, 2015). Thus, exploring the motivations of cross-border tourists is necessary.

In this study, we chose Langkawi as the destination of interest. It is a popular island destination at the north of peninsula Malaysia. Tourist arrival data in 2017 indicated that 67.4% of international tourists entered Langkawi by seaport instead of its international airport (LADA, 2018). It is ranked the second most touristic destination in Malaysia, and is extremely popular with ASEAN tourists for short holidays. Thus, the main objectives of this study are (1) to identify the main travel motivation drivers among cross-border ASEAN tourists in Langkawi, and (2) to examine the motivational factors that influence loyalty intention among cross-border ASEAN tourists in Langkawi. Specifically, we intend to determine which motivational drivers are more prevalent vis-à-vis cross-border tourism in Langkawi and examine the effect of travel motivation factors on the loyalty intention. In other words, this study examines the most important motivation among ASEAN tourists in Langkawi and pinpoints the most important motivational factors that influence cross-border tourists' loyalty intention.

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1.1. Background of cross-border tourism in ASEAN perspective

Generally, international tourism is defined as the activities of tourists performed in other sovereign nations (Timothy & Butler, 1995). Cross-border tourism is a niche area of international tourism, characterized by the activities of tourists from neighboring countries. According to Weidenfeld (2013), cross-border regions consist of all vicinal terrains of sovereign countries that share common borders. Despite the absence of a common agreement in defining cross-border tourism, it generally refers to short-haul travel by international visitors from neighboring countries for the purpose of tourism (del Río et al., 2017; Hampton, 2010). Due to the short traveling distance to the tourist destinations, cross-border tourists could be a significant target market, as in the case of mainland Chinese tourists who cross-shop in Hong Kong for bargains (Pham et al., 2015). This niche aspect of tourism is a major contributor to the economic development of nations where cross-border tourism activities are prevalent (del Río et al., 2017). Thus, within the context of this study, ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) comprise of numerous cross-border tourist destinations.

ASEAN is currently made up of 10-member countries, comprising of Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia, Philippines, Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia, Laos, and Brunei. It has a huge impact on the economic contributions to the region. Precisely, free trade along with tourism is a long-term priority for its members, which have resulted in financial benefits. Hence, apart from the free trade agreement between ASEAN members, tourism promotes economic development. The travel and tourism industry contributed 12.0% (USD329.5 billion) to the ASEAN Gross Domestic Production (GDP), ranking fifth in 2017 compared to the other regions in the world. Visitors (i.e. tourists) export accounted for USD135.6 billion in 2017, and is forecasted to grow at a rate of 5.4% until 2028 (WTTC, 2018b). This represents a considerable growth in tourists in ASEAN destinations in the long-run. Among these nations, tourist arrivals were reported to be 26.76 million in Malaysia, which is second only after Thailand (UNWTO, 2017). Table 1 shows the GDP contribution of travel and tourism in ASEAN. The growth of tourism in ASEAN has been highlighted in previous studies (e.g. Koh & Kwok, 2016; Timothy, 2003; Wong, Mistilis, & Dwyer, 2011a). However, these studies only focused on intergovernmental collaboration (Wong, Mistilis, & Dwyer, 2011b), destination branding (Dinnie, Melewar, Seidenfuss, & Musa, 2010), and opportunities and challenges of tourism destination in the ASEAN region (Koh & Kwok, 2016).

Table 1
ASEAN tourism and its contribution to GDP.

Countries	GDP per capita at current price in 2017 (USD) ^a	Relative total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP in 2017 (%) ^b	Travel and tourism's total contribution to GDP in 2028 (%) ^b
Brunei Darussalam	28,465.60	9.00	11.40
Cambodia	1421.30	32.40	28.30
Indonesia	3866.70	5.80	6.60
Lao PDR	2530.80	13.70	12.20
Malaysia	9892.20	13.40	14.40
Myanmar	1228.60	6.60	7.00
Philippines	2991.50	21.10	22.40
Singapore	57,722.20	10.20	11.40
Thailand	6735.90	21.20	28.20
Viet Nam	2390.30	9.40	9.80
ASEAN	4305.00	12.00	13.00

^a Source: ASEANStats. (2018). Gross domestic product per capita in ASEAN, at current prices (nominal), in US\$. Retrieved 7 December 2018 <https://data.aseanstats.org/indicator/AST.STC.TBL.7>

^b Source: WTTC (2018a). Country Economic Impact Analysis. Retrieved 7 December 2018 <https://www.wttc.org/economic-impact/country-analysis/country-reports/>

Table 2
Tourist arrivals in Langkawi (2010–2016).

Year	Tourists arrivals	Growth %	Total growth % (2011–2016)
2010	2,448,466	–	
2011	2,815,178	14.98	
2012	3,059,070	8.66	
2013	3,414,391	11.62	
2014	3,600,511	5.45	
2015	3,624,149	0.66	
2016	3,634,517	0.29	48.44

Source: Langkawi Development Authority (2016). Tourist arrival statistics. Retrieved 30 November 2017 <https://www.lada.gov.my/en/information/statistics/tourist-arrival-statistics>

1.2. Tourism in Langkawi

Langkawi is endowed with spectacular features befitting an attractive tourism destination, such as beautiful beaches, natural flora and fauna, and a tropical climate (Omar, Othman, & Mohamed, 2014). Tourists visit Langkawi island for both leisure and business purposes (Mansor & Ishak, 2015). Its tourism development can be regarded as minimal by the end of the 1980s, until the involvement of the federal government via the provision of capital for infrastructure development in the 1990s (Kayat, 2002). These efforts triggered the growth of the Malaysian Tourism Industry, especially in Langkawi. It is reported that tourist visits to Langkawi increased from ~200,000 in 1988 to ~1,800,000 in 1997 (Kayat, 2002). Over the past six years (2010–2016), visitors' arrival in Langkawi increased sharply, from 2,448,466 to 3,634,517, with a total growth rate of 48.44% (Table 2).

Despite the growth, recent studies indicated that Langkawi is relatively weak in its tourism competitiveness level (Zainuddin, Radzi, & Zahari, 2016). Many studies focused on Langkawi's tourism life cycle (Omar et al., 2014), integrated tourism planning (Marzuki, Hay, & James, 2012), inhabitants attitudes towards Langkawi tourism development (Marzuki, 2011), and the forecasts of tourist arrivals (Mansor & Ishak, 2015). However, there is limited knowledge on aspects of travel motivation and loyalty intention, especially among ASEAN tourists. Specifically, studies pertaining to travel motivation of ASEAN tourists to other ASEAN destinations, especially Langkawi, remains almost non-existent.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

2.1. Cross-border tourism motivation

Cross-border tourism is an important economic driver of the participating countries. Understanding cross-border tourist motivation is key towards promoting cross-border tourism. Although cross-border nations are geographically close, differences may exist in the context of economic cultures and destination aspects (del Río et al., 2017). Expenditure is a major reason for visiting any destination, especially in the case of cross-border tourism (Frenç, 2016). Cross-border tourists focus on lowering their costs of traveling, lodging, transporting, dining, and shopping. Thus, the search for value for money may promote high inflow of cross-border tourism from neighboring countries (Frenç, 2016; Hampton, 2010; Wang, 2004).

Others argue that culture is an important motivational factor. Cultural aspects that are novel or closer may encourage cross-border tourism. In other words, cross-border tourists may be motivated by linguistic and cultural similarities or the unique difference in cultural attributes (Hampton, 2010; McKercher & du Cros, 2003; Weidenfeld, 2013). This motivational component varies from one tourist to another. Adventure tourists enjoy the novelty of the tourism experience, while general tourists enjoy traveling to a relatively known environment (Ewert & Jamieson, 2003).

Other than culture, natural beauty is a motivation for tourists (Jarvis, Stoeckl, & Liu, 2016). Natural beauty is a major motivation for tourists to visit (Omar et al., 2014). As fellow members of ASEAN, Malaysia share borders with Thailand, Singapore, and Indonesia. Thus, short-haul cross-border traveling is inexpensive (Chong, 2016; Salleh, Othman, & Ramachandran, 2007). It is not surprising that the majority of tourist arrivals in Malaysia are from these three countries, where tourist arrivals from Singapore were the highest (~64%) followed by Indonesia (~14%), and Thailand (~10%) (MyTourismData, 2018). Specifically, Singapore is the wealthiest nation in the Southeast Asia (SEA) region, and has the highest cost of living while also lacking local destination offerings (Hampton, 2010). As a result of this, the cross-border tourists from Singapore is significant in Malaysia. Although Singaporeans are more economically well-off, these three countries share similarities in terms of ethnic compositions, language, and foods.

2.2. Travel motivation

Travel motivation attracts widespread attention among scholars and forms the core of travel behavior. Examining tourists' motivation is essential to understand, explain, and conceptualize travel behaviors (Prebensen, Woo, Chen, & Uysal, 2013). Motivation is a psychological state that drives an individual towards achieving a desired target (Jang & Wu, 2006). From this perspective, travel motivation affects tourists' attitudes, perceptions, involvements, and behaviors (Gnoth, 1997). Generally, motivation refers to the vigor that drives human behavior. The development of travel motivation concept is heavily based on Maslow's (1954) motivation theory, which categorizes human needs into a set hierarchy. Fulfilling lower level physiological needs is needed in order to arrive to the higher-level self-actualization needs. Despite the meaningful categorization of human needs of motivation, it is criticized for lacking empirical evidence (Dye, Mills, & WeatherbeeTerrance, 2005), especially when explaining tourists' motivation functions in a sequential and hierarchical manner (Witt & Wright, 1992).

Adopting Maslow's need hierarchy, Pearce (1988) develops a five-step Travel Career Ladder (TCL) that explains tourists' travel motivation. Ryan (1998) later validates Pearce's model by elaborating TCL as levels of needs/motivations that are in line with relaxation, followed by safety/security, relationship, self-esteem and development, and finally fulfilment of needs. Importantly, he also explains individuals' motivation towards travel aggregates and changes throughout their lives vis-à-vis their travel involvements. For a few individuals, this motivation may increase gradually, while for others it might remain similar due to budgetary or wellbeing constraints. It is also argued that tourists may begin from any fluctuating TCL levels based on their respective past involvements, information, and level of a particular action (Rahman, Zailani, & Musa, 2017). In other words, a laddering concept of tourist needs might not be appropriate for the elucidation of the causal relationship between motivation and behavior.

Contrarily, a two-dimension theoretical framework of tourist motivation may explain tourists' behavior (Iso-Ahola, 1982). Two motivational drivers; escapism (tendency to escape from daily life activities related to personal and interpersonal problems), and reward (tendency to seek essential rewards by traveling in various conditions) are argued to affect tourist behavior. Others explain tourist motivation by examining the socio-psychological and cultural motives (e.g. Crompton, 1979). Specifically, this perspective argues that travel motivation is made up of various components, such as social, psychological, economic, situational, and/or environmental factors, all of which drive tourists' travel decision. These components are further categorized as the escaping/seeking dimensions or the socio-psychological and cultural motives.

Similarly, motivation can be divided into the push or pull factors (Dann, 1977). Push factors are internal forces that drive a tourist towards an action, while pull factors are external cues that prompt

tourists to make travel decisions (Jaapar, Musa, Moghavvemi, & Saub, 2017; Jang & Wu, 2006). For example, physiological and psychological aspects of human needs (e.g. taste, fatigue, relaxation, social belongingness, exploration and evaluation of self, prestige, enrichment of relationships and enabling of social interaction) are internal forces that could push tourists to make travel decision, while economic aspects (e.g. cost of travel, income, expenditure, inflation, employability, destination distance, tourist location, seasons, flora and fauna) are pull factors that could prompt a tourist to visit/revisit a destination (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

In line with Dann's conceptualization of the motivation factor, this study only examines the pull motivational factors, specifically economic, nature, and cultural aspects, because studies on pull factors of external attributes are scarce (e.g. Li & Cai, 2012). Other studies examining both push-pull factors have only considered pull factors confined to micro-level issues, linked to the destinations' size, weather, cleanliness, shopping, and local cuisines (e.g. Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Macro-level factors (e.g. costs, distance to travel, nature aspect of destination, and cultural novelty) are often overlooked.

Essentially, Jarvis et al. (2016) argued that economic, social, and environmental factors are antecedents of tourist satisfaction, which could subsequently affect the likelihood of revisiting intention with a positive relational effect. However, they limit the conceptualization of economic factors as the degree of economic development and social factors as the safety and security at a touristic location. Jarvis et al. (2016) only considered the economic aspect as cost incentives, nature aspect as the natural beauty of the location, and cultural aspect as the novelty of an unknown culture. These are the pull factors beyond the control of tourists, and are hence regarded as external to an individual. In line with this perspective, this study only considers the pull motivational factors that influence loyalty intentions.

2.3. Loyalty intention

Like many other industries, tourism is strongly driven by repeat visitors. Most tourists like to repeatedly visit a few (favorite) destinations that give them the most fulfilling experience. Repeat visitors reduce various types of costs associated with marketing, are less price sensitive, and help increase profit margins (Assaker & Hallak, 2012; Choo & Petrick, 2014; Jarvis et al., 2016). Loyalty intention to a tourist destination signifies the propensity of future repeat visiting behaviors (Assaker, Vinzi, & O'Connor, 2011). Hence, behavioral intention can be characterized as tourists' expected behavior in a given situation in the form of probability of action (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The probability of returning to a specific tourist location may depend on various factors, yet the majority of studies in travel motivations indicate that satisfaction is one of the important antecedents (Jarvis et al., 2016). Other antecedents include perceived quality, destination image, past experience, cultural differences, novelty seeking, destination attributes, and positive word-of-mouth (Assaker et al., 2011; Mat Som, Marzuki, Yousefi, & AbuKhalifeh, 2012). Musa, Seng, Thirumoorthi, and Abessi (2011) pointed out that word-of-mouth is an important informational source when it comes to destination selection. A positive word-of-mouth is framed by the tourists' own experience, probably from hassle-free visits (Jaapar et al., 2017). Most tourists share their experiences and opinions with friends and family via social networking sites (SNS) (e.g. Facebook), which may influence other tourists' opinions of sites of interest (Berger, 2014). Positive experiences posted in SNS will certainly encourage other potential visitors to visit those destinations (Fang, Tang, Li, & Wu, 2018). In destination tourism, the intention to return (i.e. loyalty intention) is a vital aspect that leads to the successful performance of tourism (Jarvis et al., 2016; Li & Cai, 2012). The following sections discuss the relationship of three pull motivation factors (i.e. economic, nature and cultural aspects) on loyalty intention.

2.4. Research framework

Many studies reported that tourist satisfaction is a major antecedent of the intention to return. For example, Yoon and Uysal (2005), who examine the influence of both push and pull motivational factors on destination loyalty via tourist satisfaction, indicated that loyalty is positively associated with both satisfaction and push motivation. Contrarily, pull motivational factors negatively affect satisfaction. Later, Battour, Battor, and Ismail (2012) adopted Yoon and Uysal's model to study Muslim tourists in Malaysia. Their results indicated that both push and pull factors positively influence satisfaction. Meanwhile, Quintal and Polczynski (2010) indicated that pull motivational factors (e.g. perceived attractiveness, risk, value, quality) positively affect both satisfaction and revisit intentions (i.e. loyalty intention).

However, the degree of loyalty intention may not always depend on tourist satisfaction. Trip satisfaction can be influenced by associated emotional and monetary investments (Alegre & Garau, 2010; Jarvis et al., 2016). Few visitors may not return to a destination despite experiencing higher levels of satisfaction. They, however, may be inspired to revisit a destination due to novelty-seeking behaviors and monetary considerations (Assaker et al., 2011; Assaker & Hallak, 2012). Furthermore, only novelty and knowledge are associated with behavioral intentions (i.e. prestige and luxury experience, exciting experience, self-development, while escape and relationships were not significant predictors) (Li & Cai, 2012). They recommend further investigation on the antecedents of behavioral intention. Thus, this study examines the influence of pull motivational factors (i.e. economic, nature and cultural aspect) on loyalty intention.

2.4.1. Economic aspect

The economic aspect refers to the cost associated with a journey. Tourists incur various types of costs, such as lodging, transportation, food, and entertainment while traveling. Often, promotions/incentives by destination marketing organizations (DMOs) influence tourists' destination choices. Tourists prefer to return to a destination to avoid the increased cost of visiting a new destination (Assaker & Hallak, 2012; Enrique Bigné, Sánchez, & Andreu, 2009). The traveling costs to a destination vary according to distance and the level of economic/financial benefits/costs gained/incurred (Nicolau & Más, 2006). For example, Enrique Bigné et al. (2009) reported a significant positive relationship in the short-run promotion programs with revisit intentions. In other words, promotions do not work well in eliciting long-term revisit intention. Jarvis et al. (2016) highlighted the effect of economic factors on satisfaction and revisit intentions, however, they only conceptualized the economic aspect as economic development and tourists' income. This study conceptualizes the economic aspect from the perspective of cost to travel to a destination, which is a pull factor. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₁. Economic aspect positively affects loyalty intention.

2.4.2. Nature aspect

The nature aspect includes the natural attraction of a destination that encourages tourists to visit/revisit. Tourists spend their leisure time enjoying scenic beauty, weather, and flora and fauna in many popular global destinations. For example, the number of visitors to the Great Barrier Reef in Australia is increasing daily due to its natural beauty, coupled with various adventurous undertakings (Jarvis et al., 2016). Thus, the nature aspect is expected to pull tourists towards any destination (visiting/revisiting). Jarvis et al. (2016) found that the environment aspect is an antecedent of satisfaction and visitors returning. However, they defined nature as the quality of the environment, such as the climate, sunshine, and infrastructure, while Yoon and Uysal (2005) regard weather, cleanness, shopping nightlife, and local cuisines as items in the nature aspect. Their results evidently stressed the importance of natural scenarios as pull factors. Thus, the following

hypothesis is formulated:

H₂. Nature aspect of a destination positively affects loyalty intention.

2.4.3. Cultural aspect

The cultural aspect refers to the novelty of culture that provides new knowledge and understanding to tourists. While visiting a destination, tourists experience new cuisines, cultural activities, events, music, and lifestyles. For example, tourists visiting the Valencian town of Bunol in Spain enjoy the “La Tomatina” festive, new year, or “carnival” celebrations, which are signature local events. Moreover, the cultural aspect provides a novel experience for tourists, and is regarded as an important facet in tourist decision making (Assaker et al., 2011; Petrick, 2002). Yoon and Uysal (2005) only considered the cultural novelty aspect and failed to examine other components of culture. Jarvis et al. (2016) also elucidated the relationship of social factors with satisfaction, and subsequently, with returning visitors. However, their definition of the social aspect only includes safety and security issues of destinations. Considering the obvious gap in past studies with respect to culture and intention to return, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₃. The cultural aspect of a destination positively affects the loyalty intention.

3. Methods and analysis

3.1. Measurements

This study adopted previously-validated scales consisting of measurement items developed by previous researchers. Measurement items for travel motivation (i.e. economic, nature, and cultural aspects) were adopted from Jonsson and Devonish (2008), Kuncharin and Mohamed (2013) and Peter and Anandkumar (2016) for the context of cross-border tourism. The four items measuring the economic aspects are “low exchange rates, low taxes on products/services, famous individual malls or centers, and duty-free shops/products”. Nature aspect comprises seven items, “to attend sporting events, to get close to nature, to enjoy beaches/the sea, to enjoy mountains, to enjoy scuba diving, to enjoy snorkeling, and to experience nightlife”. The cultural aspect consists of seven items, which are “to experience different cultures and different ways of life, to attend cultural events that I don't have access to at home, to fulfil my curiosity about local traditional lifestyles, to enjoy natural, and urban landscapes, to experience a homestay, and to visit some cultural, and historical attractions”. Items for loyalty intention were adopted from Steen (2016), which examines the intention to visit a country in the future.

The questions were validated by an expert panel using two rounds of the Delphi method. During the first-round, we contacted the expert panel (six academic experts and professor) to discuss whether or not the items were suitable for measuring cultural, economic, and nature aspects of cross-border tourism. Comments made by the expert panel were pooled, and after some revisions, the items meeting the consensus criteria in round 1 were incorporated into Round 2 (Mesmer-Magnus, Murase, DeChurch, & Jimenez, 2010). In Round 2, the questionnaire was again presented to the same panel, primarily to select the most important items to be measured.

As per previous research, all constructs were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (refer to Appendix A). In a pilot test, the questionnaire was distributed to 10 undergraduates in University Malaya to check for its understanding and ease of answerability (face validity). After minor wording corrections, the questionnaire was finalized. We then distributed it to $n = 30$ tourists in Kuala Lumpur to confirm the reliability (Cronbach's α) of its constructs. Cronbach's α s (pilot test) ranged from 0.70–0.80, which confirmed the constructs' reliability. The questionnaire was then translated into Thai and Bahasa Indonesia, then back-translated into English (Brislin, 1980).

Table 3
Demographic profile of respondents.

Characteristic	Group	%
Gender	Female	38
	Male	62
Age	1–20	8.7
	21–40	59.8
	41–60	22.3
	Over 60	7.6
Nationality	Singapore	42.40
	Thailand	42.40
	Philippines	5.40
	Indonesia, Brunei, Laos and Vietnam	9.8
Education	High school	13.1
	Certificate/Diploma	23.9
	Undergraduate	51.6
	Postgraduate	10.9
Marital status	Married	32.6
	Single	66.3
Occupation	Private sector employee	37
	Student	23.9
	Government servant	16.8
	Self-employed	10.9
	Retiree	6
	Unemployed	1.6
	Others	2.2

Note: n = 200.

3.2. Sampling and procedures

The authors distributed the questionnaires to tourists waiting at Langkawi's jetty or the airport to go home or heading to other destinations within Langkawi. Only ASEAN tourists were sampled, as per the objective of the research. The nationality of the tourists was determined prior to distributing the questionnaire. Out of a total of n = 300 distributed, only n = 200 questionnaires were returned. The mean age of the respondents is 35 years old (Male = 62%, Single 66.3%). ~61.4% had been to Langkawi previously (i.e. returning tourist). The majority of them are cross-border tourists from Thailand and Singapore. Table 3 shows the demographic details of the respondents:

3.3. Data analysis and results

We used IBM SPSS 24 to examine the data. First, we checked for normality and outliers. No outliers were detected. Also, the normality test indicated that the data were normally distributed (refer Appendix B). Cronbach α for each construct exceeded 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) (refer Appendix C).

Among the pull motivational factors, the economic aspect scored the highest mean value. Correlations between the constructs were 0.55–0.69. Next, the principal component analysis (PCA) was used to determine the grouping of the measurement items and examine their respective loadings (refer Appendix A). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was 0.81, while the Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($p < .001$), and all items' loading achieved the recommended value of 0.50 (Field, 2013). Following the PCA, the items were analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) with Amos 18. To meet an adequate goodness of fit, the path estimates, modification indices, and standardized residuals of the measurement model were assessed (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014). From the modification indices, we removed nine items to improve the measurement model's fit (Hulland, 1999; MacCallum, Roznowski, & Necowitz, 1992). The deleted items were from the nature (enjoy beaches/sea, mountain, and experience nightlife), economic aspect (duty-free shops/ products, wide choices of product, promotion offers, bargain hunting, and famous individual malls or centers) and cultural aspects (enjoy rural landscape). After the removal of the weak items, the measurement model achieved excellent goodness of fit indices

Table 4
Reliability and validity of the study variables.

Constructs	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4
Economic aspect	0.834	0.706	0.840			
Nature aspect	0.862	0.771	0.356	0.878		
Cultural aspect	0.926	0.763	0.358	0.609	0.873	
Loyalty intention	0.927	0.897	0.468	0.302	0.380	0.947

Note: CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted, Diagonal values with bold numbers are the square root of AVE. Below diagonal are interconstruct correlation values.

($\chi^2 = 299.556$, $\chi^2/df = 2.066$, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.933, Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) = 0.852, and Incremental Fit Index (IFI) = 0.959, NFI = 0.879, Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) = 0.058, and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.076) (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

We further determined the composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) in order to evaluate convergent validity. The CFA results showed that the standardized parameter estimations for most remaining items exceeded 0.70, while the CR values exceeded 0.80. All AVEs exceeded 0.50, which confirmed convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). We evaluated the discriminant validity by examining the values of the square root of AVE with the inter-construct correlations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The results confirmed that the square root values of each construct AVE exceeded that of the inter-construct correlation, which verified the adequacy of the discriminant validity of the measurement model (Table 4).

In the following SEM analysis, the results of the structural model achieved acceptable fit ($\chi^2 = 190.861$, $\chi^2/df = 1.853$, CFI = 0.958, GFI = 0.892, IFI = 0.959, NFI = 0.915, RMR = 0.058, and RMSEA = 0.068). There were significant positive relationships between the economic aspect ($\beta = 0.262$, $p = .002$), nature aspect ($\beta = 0.234$; $p = .029$) and the cultural aspect ($\beta = 0.173$; $p = .047$) with loyalty intention. The relationship between cultural aspect and loyalty intention was also significant ($\beta = 0.173$; $p = .047$). Overall, 26% of the variance in loyalty intention can be explained by the economic, nature, and cultural aspects (Fig. 1).

4. Discussion

The main aim of this study is to examine the effect of motivational factors – economic, nature, and cultural aspects on ASEAN cross-cultural tourists' revisit intention. Specifically, the objective is to investigate the influence of the pull motivational factors on loyalty intention in Langkawi. The motivational factors reported a positive and significant ($p < .05$) influence on tourists' loyalty intention, where the economic aspect ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.69$) has the most significant influence ($p = .002$) on loyalty intention, followed by the nature aspect ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.76$, $p = .029$), and cultural aspect ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 0.75$, $p = .047$). The results for the influence of economic aspect support that of previous findings, which argue that cost is an important element affecting decision making (Assaker & Hallak, 2012; Enrique Bigné et al., 2009). The economic aspect refers to the economic costs associated with travel. Lower costs trigger a higher economic motivation, leading to a greater propensity to revisit a destination.

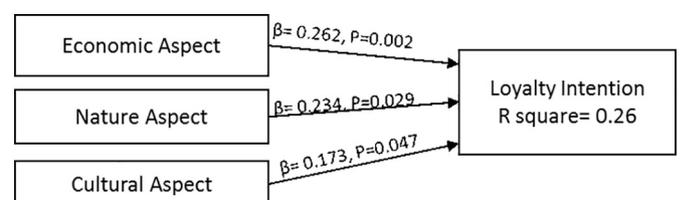


Fig. 1. Research framework.

Undoubtedly, transportation cost is a major economic consideration for ASEAN tourists, although the overall traveling costs to Langkawi is inexpensive, especially from neighboring countries. Most tourists from Thailand travel to Langkawi via land and sea, which is cost-effective. The Langkawi Development Authority reported that many tourists in Langkawi use the seaport more than the airport (LADA, 2018). However, most tourists from Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Brunei, which are the top four ASEAN tourists to visit Malaysia in 2017, usually arrived via low-cost flights (i.e. affordability) due to the short distances and air traveling time (Mansor, 2018). Several studies also supported the influence of transportation cost on tourists' revisit intention (Hsu, Yen, Chang, & Woon, 2016) and the availability of low-cost airline traveling choice among ASEAN tourists (Buaphiban & Truong, 2017).

Our findings also supported the supposition that the nature aspect is a significant factor that motivates tourists to revisit Langkawi. The results are consistent with other studies arguing that tourists' leisurely enjoy nature beauty and the weather of a destination (Jarvis et al., 2016; Kirillova, Fu, Lehto, & Cai, 2014). Langkawi is not only known as a beautiful island with gorgeous natural attractions, it is also famous for its shopping malls, duty-free shopping, nightlife, and local cuisine, all of which attract tourists to revisit Langkawi. Overall, both the economic and nature aspects motivate tourists to return to Langkawi.

This study also confirms the influence of the cultural aspect on loyalty intention among ASEAN cross-border tourists, although not to a great extent. The findings revealed a small effect, probably due to cultural similarity and proximity of the neighboring countries to Langkawi. Most tourists may have some prior cultural knowledge about Langkawi due to geographical proximity. This results in a smaller coefficient ($\beta = 0.173$) relative to that of the economic aspect ($\beta = 0.262$). Literature indicates that the cultural aspect is related to the novelty of the culture that provides new knowledge and experience to tourists, thus the smaller effect infers closer cultural proximity among Thais and Singaporeans. Moreover, our findings agree with Assaker et al. (2011) and Petrick (2002), which supports the cultural distance theory (e.g. McKercher & du Cros, 2003; Ng, Lee, & Soutar, 2007; O'Leary & Deegan, 2003). The theory stipulates that tourists' destination choice is driven by cultural difference, i.e. cultural novelty/dissimilarity, rather than cultural similarity, as one of the pull motivational factors that motivate tourists to visit/revisit a destination.

5. Theoretical and managerial implications

This study outlines valuable insights on travel motivation factors of ASEAN cross-border tourists and their respective loyalty intentions. It sheds light on the existing body of knowledge in terms of the effect of motivational factors on loyalty intentions in Langkawi within the context of cross-border tourism destination research. Our results indicated that the economic aspect is the most significant factor influencing revisiting intention, followed by the nature aspect, and cultural aspect in the case of cross-border tourism destinations. The economic motivation is triggered when the cost of traveling is low, while the cultural aspect has a smaller effect on loyalty intention among the travel motivation factors probably due to the high cultural proximity. The results also outline a practical implication to ASEAN tourism, as member countries are somewhat culturally similar in the context of food, festivals, events, and fashion. However, when observed closely, we do have subtle and sometimes obvious differences in cultural practices, norms, and values. Thus, we suggest that cross-border destination should focus on cultural attractions that promote cultural dissimilarities.

This study also outlined a few managerial and marketing implications. Our results indicated that loyalty intention to revisit Langkawi is highly associated with the economic aspect of travel, where DMOs should account for. DMOs should also be aware that the majority of cross-border tourists are low-spending visitors. Hence, the revisiting intention can be managed by easing accessibility and increasing availability of cost-effective transportations, such as low-cost airlines,

ferries, and cruises to reach Langkawi Island, with the support of the development and availability of affordable hotels, foods, and tour activities. A destination attribute that capture the tourists' attention is nature. Langkawi Island is well-known for its beautiful beaches, tropical climate, and flora and fauna (Omar et al., 2014). Our study identifies the nature aspect as an important motivational factor that influences loyalty intention among tourists of neighboring countries. Hence, the DMOs need to protect its natural environment and heritages that are attractive to tourists. In other words, sustainable or eco-friendly tourism should be the guiding philosophy for Langkawi.

There are diversities and similarities in terms of the elements of cultural aspect, such as language, food, cultural events, and celebrations within ASEAN. This study finds relatively lower, yet significantly positive influence of cultural aspect on loyalty intention. We recommend that DMOs enhance the cultural aspects of Langkawi Island. It can provide the differential experience for tourists if properly developed and positioned. Innovative cultural activities that involve events, food, festivals, music, and local lifestyle can uplift the image of Langkawi Island as a unique cultural experience hub for cross-border tourists.

The managerial implications are related to the communications of a destination's economic, nature, and cultural aspects. The message contents should include highlights on low-cost transportation, accessible destination, affordable stay and food, exciting shopping facilities, unique nature, and intriguing cultural essence broadcasted via proper communication channels. Social networking sites (SNS), such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter should be the primary choice alongside other traditional media. Furthermore, the tourism Malaysia web portal must also be synchronized and updated on a regular basis. In fact, this portal would be the most trustworthy source of information vis-à-vis Langkawi. DMOs needs to organize tourism events/fairs on a regular basis so that tour operators can participate and offer various tour packages that are affordable and focus on nature and unique cultural experiences. Tourism programs must be promoted rigorously via multiple communication channels and include the participation of tour operators. Overall, an integrated marketing communication approach is suggested for the promotion of Langkawi tourism.

6. Limitations of the study and future research

This study faced a few limitations. First, despite the fact that this study intends to sample ASEAN tourists, most respondents answering the questionnaires were from Thailand and Singapore. A future study should consider a quota sampling technique to proportionately represent the ASEAN region. Second, this study only considers the pull motivational factors on influencing loyalty intention. Future studies may wish to combine both the pull and push motivational factors in order to provide a more holistic insight of the influence of motivational factors on loyalty intention. Literature reveals that there are few other studies that investigated cross-border tourism. The current study validated the pull motivational factors in the context of cross-border tourism, therefore, future studies should precede qualitative research to develop scales that are more specific prior to the use of quantitative methods.

7. Conclusion

This study significantly contributes to cross-border tourism literature by analyzing the pull motivational components that affect loyalty intention to a tourism destination. Destination management authorities of other cross-border countries will also benefit from the research findings and suggestions, even though the implications suggested in this work are specific to Langkawi Island. Other cross-border nations will also be able to use the results of this research if it follows the general factors of pull motivation – namely the economic, nature, and cultural aspects. These components are common to any destination in the

context of travel motivation of cross-border tourists and applicable to other cross-border tourism.

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Author contribution statement

All authors participated in manuscript development, authorship, and editing for publication. All of them preserved the full access to data in the study and jointly took responsibility for the integrity and accuracy of data analysis.

Appendix A. List of the constructs and items measured by 5-point Likert scale

Constructs	Items	Item level		Construct level		Factor loading (PCA results)
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Nature aspect	<i>To enjoy beaches/sea^a</i>	4.04	0.87	3.56	0.76	0.835
	To get close to nature	3.87	0.88			0.781
	<i>To enjoy mountain^a</i>	3.82	0.89			0.734
	To enjoy scuba diving	3.46	1.07			0.854
	To enjoy snorkeling	3.44	1.12			0.803
	<i>To experience nightlife^a</i>	3.24	1.05			0.716
Economic aspect	To attend sporting events	3.16	1.13	3.92	0.69	0.649
	Low tax on products/service	3.78	0.84			0.798
	Cheap flight	3.76	0.93			0.704
	High prices at home low prices in destinations	3.67	0.90			0.783
	<i>Duty free shops/products^a</i>	3.64	0.93			0.708
	Low exchanges rate	3.64	0.90			0.830
	<i>Wide choices of product^a</i>	3.48	0.91			0.711
	<i>Promotion offers^a</i>	3.34	0.82			0.714
	<i>Bargain hunting^a</i>	3.33	0.87			0.780
	<i>Famous individual malls or centres^a</i>	3.16	0.91			0.812
Cultural aspect	<i>To enjoy rural landscape^a</i>	3.76	0.87	3.52	0.75	0.742
	To visit historical attractions	3.67	0.97			0.790
	To experience different cultures and different ways of life	3.62	0.91			0.766
	To fulfil curiosity about local traditional lifestyle	3.49	0.89			0.861
	To experience homestay	3.43	0.96			0.684
	To attend cultural events that I don't have access to at home	3.37	0.91			0.829
Loyalty intention	To enjoy urban landscape	3.31	1.03	4.05	0.72	0.775
	I like to recommend to my friends to visit Langkawi	4.03	0.76			0.959
	I like to recommend to my relatives to visit Langkawi	3.98	0.79			0.948
	I like to re-visit Langkawi again	4.01	0.84			0.886

^a Items with italic font were discarded during CFA.

Appendix B. Normality test

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Loyalty intention	0.175	183	0.000	0.874	183	0.000

^a Lilliefors significance correction.

Appendix C. Cronbach α and descriptive statistics

Constructs	Cronbach α	Mean	SD
Economic aspect	0.83	3.92	0.69
Nature aspect	0.79	3.56	0.76
Cultural aspect	0.71	3.52	0.75
Loyalty intention	0.74	4.05	0.72

Appendix D. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.03.004>.

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