

# The causal factors influencing repurchase intentions of local tourists in Thailand during COVID-19 crisis

Sumana Laparojkit and Muttanachai Suttipun

## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study aims to examine the causal factors of customer motivation, trust and loyalty, influencing the level of repurchase intentions of local tourists travelling during pandemic COVID-19 crisis in Thailand.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The population of this study comprised all Thai local tourists travelling in Thailand. Using simple random sampling of local tourists on travel in Thailand, quantitative data were collected from 500 tourists as the sampling, representing Northern Thailand, North-Eastern Thailand, Central Thailand, Southern Thailand and Bangkok. Path analysis, including correlation matrix and factor confirmation, was used to test the causal factors influencing the level of repurchase intentions.

**Findings** – Motivation trust, customer trust, customer loyalty and repurchase intentions of Thai domestic tourism were on a high level. In addition, there were positive influences of customer motivation, trust and loyalty on the level of repurchase intentions by local tourists travelling in Thailand.

**Originality/value** – The study results demonstrate that the social exchange theory can be used to explain the influences of customer motivation, customer trust and loyalty on repurchase intentions of domestic Thai tourism.

**Keywords** Repurchase intention, Customer motivation, Customer trust, Customer loyalty, Local tourist, COVID-19 crisis, Thailand

**Paper type** Research paper

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## 1. Introduction

The world has been frightened into crisis by the spread of a new coronavirus (COVID-19). The crisis has impacted on the global economy and a variety of industries, especially the tourism industry because tourists' behaviours are totally changed from living with the new normal. Therefore, many tourism businesses have been forced to scale back their operations and close temporarily as a result of the pandemic. According to the Thai tourism industry statistics, the numbers of international tourists have been drastically declined from 39.9 million tourists in 2019 to 6.7 million tourists in 2020 that count as –83.25% (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2021). The Thai tourism industry has suffered a downturn of customer's repurchase intention as a result of the pandemic. Thus, some factors such as customer motivation, trust and loyalty may be able to interact with repurchase intention. For example, Jamal and Budke (2020) point out service providers and hospitality employees must be aware and prepared so that customers are not turned away irregularly owing to concerns that they might be infected with the COVID-19. Hence, the motivations of the local tourists to travel in the country are fascinating to examine for understanding the internal aspects of tourist behaviours. This is because motivation is an internal driver of human behaviours (Solomon, 2018). On the other factors, trust and loyalty are one of the most important aspects of business strategy. Consequently, when businesses achieve more customers trust and loyalty, they have a greater chance of having customers who will sustain them and assist them survive in difficult times (Oliver, 1999). These customers also support companies through

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repurchases of goods and services; when customer loyalty exists, customers can increase their support through repurchases (Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978).

Therefore, the concepts of motivation, trust, loyalty and repurchase intention can all be applied to local tourists' repurchase intention in Thailand, allowing local tourism businesses to generate sales by building customer motivation, trust and loyalty. These concepts are mutually related, and the social exchange theory can explain how local tourism businesses can motivate local tourists and build on the trust and loyalty. The social exchange theory is employed as the underlying theoretical framework for explaining causal relationships of these factors. Therefore, the social exchange theory is used to explain customer repurchase intentions when they reward businesses from their motivation, trust and loyalty in this study.

Even though there are several studies on the relationships of motivation, trust and loyalty towards repurchase intentions, most of these studies have examined the relationships in a normal situation (Chu, 2009; Kim *et al.*, 2009, 2019; Meng *et al.*, 2011; Prayag, 2012; Check and Ho, 2016; Sato *et al.*, 2016; Wen and Huang, 2019). However, when there is a crisis like the coronavirus pandemic, the results may differ or remain the same, but this is still unexplored. In addition, it is concerned whether Thai local tourists can be driven to repurchase intention by the strategies of Thai tourism industry consisting of motivation, trust and loyalty as well as international tourists. Even though Thai government has launched policies and campaigns as customer motivations to encourage the local tourists travelling in Thailand instead of international tourists who cannot come to travel during COVID-19 crisis such as "We travel together", "Share happiness through travel" or "Pay half" (ThaiGov, 2020), the policies and campaigns are still not examined yet. Consequently, this leads to the questions of this study, namely, whether during the crisis, the factors motivation, trust, loyalty and repurchase intentions still relate the same way as before? Whether or not these factors still have an effect on repurchase intentions amongst local tourists? When there is a crisis, do these factors still play an important role in supporting the local tourist businesses?

To respond to the questions posed above, this study aimed to (1) investigate the level of customer motivation, trust, loyalty and repurchase intentions of local tourists travelling in Thailand; (2) examine the causal factors of customer motivation, trust and loyalty influencing the level of repurchase intentions of local tourists travelling in Thailand.

This study offers another perspective to the crisis management by examining the causal factors of local tourists repurchase intentions, among those who travel in the country during the crisis, contributing to the literature on emerging economies. The study examines the relationships of customer motivation, trust, loyalty and repurchase intentions during the pandemic crisis. The social exchange theory is empirically tested for explanation of causal factors in different contexts. In addition, this study also assesses the government policies and campaigns in healing and supporting the tourism industry in Thailand during the pandemic crisis. The tourism-related local businesses are engaged in transportation, travel, food and beverage, souvenirs and local products, accommodation and other related businesses. These businesses are included in this study, and the findings can support improving their business strategies.

The structure of this study begins with the theoretical perspective of the social exchange theory in the influences of customer motivation, trust and loyalty on repurchase intentions. Then the review of literature to develop the conceptual framework and hypotheses. The population and sampling, variable measurements, data collection and data analysis are also explained in the methods section, followed by findings and discussion. Finally, the summary, the research implications and limitations are addressed to conclude this report.

## 2. Theoretical perspective

Theory of social exchange was originally developed by sociologist George Homans to study social behaviour with regards to interpersonal exchanges. It is one of the theoretical foundations for the study of social behaviour (Homans, 1958, 1961). The social exchange theory is based on the

relation between the rewards and costs between two or more actors. [Homans \(1958\)](#) utilises basic economics and behaviourism in the explanation of human behaviour when rewards and costs are reimbursed. He concludes that costs and rewards play an important role in the social interactions between actors by evaluating costs and benefits for actors contributing to the relationship ([Homan, 1961](#)). In other words, actors count and evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of actor relations in relation to their effort in this respect.

The fundamental paradigm of the social exchange theory is based on the beliefs about the nature of human relationships and human nature. [Homans \(1961\)](#) described social behaviour as a concept of interaction, and an interaction that is rewarded or punished by action of the other actors is considered to be any type of emitted behaviour of an actor ([Tittenbrun, 2012](#)). Any activities such as tangible and intangible exchanges, rewards and activities between parties are considered as social exchange. The main argument for the study of social behaviour by the theory of social exchange is, therefore, reward and punishment.

The social exchange theory has been applied in several disciplines, including tourism and marketing context. For instance, [Sierra and McQuitty \(2005\)](#) adopt a social exchange approach in the explanation of emotion, shared responsibility and loyalty in the service provider context. [Yoon et al. \(2001\)](#) study the host–tourism exchange process, which affects resident’s perceptions of tourism. They found that the components in an exchange process of the host–tourism context are composed of economic, socio-cultural and environmental factors. Likewise, [Muhammad et al. \(2017\)](#) apply the social exchange theory in studying the influence of trust on the repurchase intentions in the airline business. [Chuang \(2010\)](#) applies the social exchange theory in the study of rural tourism and found that residents who were economically relied on rural tourism for a living tended to have more positive attitudes towards the business.

The social exchange theory has been applied in various studies of tourism marketing. Thus, this study employs the social exchange theory as the core theoretical foundation in examining the causal relationships of customer motivation, loyalty, trust and repurchase intentions of local tourists in the study of Thailand tourism industry during the pandemic crisis. In this study, it is proposed that the theory of social exchange serves as a link between local tourists and tourism business in Thailand, allowing the social exchange theory to be applied to support their customer choices that they are seeking for whilst the businesses receive rewards such as customer trust, loyalty and repurchase intention in exchange. Hence, this study believes that during the COVID-19 pandemic in Thailand, the interaction between Thai local tourists, which are counted as the customer side, and tourism businesses, which are counted as the business side, are connected as a consequence of cost–benefit analysis. This is because most Thai local tourists are generally looking for rewards from a transactional relationship rather than a surplus of costs such as supporting promotional campaign for travelling and worthy service quality. If the local tourism business can provide them with a certain level of quality in terms of products and services, the local tourists will support the business by granting them with trust, loyalty, which will result in a repurchase intention. Furthermore, this study particularly focuses on Thai local tourists who have experience in domestic travelling in Thailand to find out whether their demands were met in their previous experience of domestic travelling and that made them feel impress and satisfy, so they tend to support the local businesses again. Consequently, local businesses will also benefit from that support from the customers and assist their business to survive during the pandemic crisis.

### 3. Literature review and hypothesis development

In this section, four main topics are elaborated on, namely, customer repurchase intentions, customer motivation, customer trust and customer loyalty.

#### 3.1 Customer repurchase intention

Repurchase intention can be interpreted as an individual judgement on the purchase from the same business of a product, service or brand again ([Razak et al., 2014](#)). It is the consumer

behaviour of purchasing the same product or brand (Khalifa and Liu, 2007). The intentional decision by the customer to repeat purchase products or brands from the same company is considered as repurchase intention (Hellier *et al.*, 2003). Research on repurchase intention is essential as it can predict potential revenue. For instance, Chen and Cheng (2009) research the behaviour of internet shopper's behaviour and identify repurchase intention as intention to buy product or service repeatedly. Chang *et al.* (2020) found that customer repurchase intention will be higher when they have positive feeling towards service provider in their consumption experience. As a result, this study seeks to identify the antecedent variables that predict local tourists' repurchase intentions in Thailand.

### 3.2 Customer motivation

Customer motivation is generally defined as biological and psychological wants and needs, as well as vital factors that generate, guide and incorporate an individual's behaviour and activity (Dann, 1981). In the tourism context, Pearce (2011) define customer motivation to travel as the integrated network of cultural and biological forces globally that enhances value and gives direction to a tourist's travel choices, experiences and behaviours. Customer motivation can be explained in terms of push and pull forces (Dann, 1981). Push factors concern cognitive processes and sociopsychological motivations that encourage an individual to travel, while pull factors refer to external and situational motivations such as destination attributes and leisure infrastructure (Wen and Hueng, 2019). In a similar manner, Jang *et al.* (2009) mention that push factors can be considered as sociopsychological needs that establish individual desire to travel, whereas pull factors are external to the individual that attract the individual to a specific destination because of destination attractions. Katsikari *et al.* (2020) found that both push and pull tourism motivation have an influence on tourists' desire to travel. The push and pull framework has been often incorporated in the motivation factor to understand tourist motivations in various tourism markets (Wen and Huang, 2019). Therefore, the push and pull factors are combined in the empirical study of local tourists in Thailand who travel during the pandemic crisis, as the unidimensional customer motivation factor. Furthermore, this study adds value in terms of perspective of local tourist in a developing country, and also combines government policy and campaigns during pandemic crisis to further test for customer motivation of local tourists in Thailand.

Customer motivation acts as the driving force behind customer behaviour, which indicates the guideline of customer behaviour (Fodness, 1994), whereas customer repurchase intention concerns to customer behaviour in the value evaluation in business products and services (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1998). Since the customer motivation is an internal factor that stimulates and leads to customer behaviour, the interrelationship of customer motivation and customer repurchase intention is that the value evaluation decision may be activated by an internal desire to satisfy customer need. As an example, Prayag (2012) empirically found a positive relationship between motivation and senior tourists' repurchase intentions. Likewise, Jang *et al.* (2009) found a positive relationship between these two variables and address an important of customer motivation factor such as novelty seeking can be increased by affective states and therefore generate travel intention. Understanding customer motivation is an important aspect for businesses to offer products and services that satisfy customer and result in repurchase intention. Accordingly, this study examines the relationship between motivation and repurchase intentions in a tourism setting during a pandemic crisis. Therefore, the hypothesis for examining the relationships is as follows:

*H1.* There is a positive influence of customer motivation on repurchase intentions of local tourists travelling in Thailand during pandemic crisis.

### 3.3 Customer trust

Trust conceptualised by Morgan and Hunt (1994) was that it exists when one party is trustful of the integrity and reliability of another party. Moorman *et al.* (1992) also mention that trust is built upon faith in one party's trustworthiness and honesty. Trust plays an important role in the social

exchange theory because it improves the willingness to participate in social exchanges that are vulnerable but potentially rewarding. As opposed to one-time transaction in a market setting, social exchange is built on long-term relationships (e.g. between the host community and the tourist sector) and, unlike economic transactions, the persistence of social exchanges is dependent on trust between the participants (Cook, 2000). Trust is seen as a willingness for customers to participate in potential transactions in relationship marketing to improve their perceptions of future risk reduction (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991). It is also seen as a crucial resource for a business's survival through turbulent times as it offers positive impact on competitive advantage to the business (Pratono, 2021).

The positive effect of customer motivation on customer trust has been comprehensively studied (Akhlaq and Ahmed, 2013; Bulut and Karabulut, 2018; Kim *et al.*, 2019). For instance, Akhlaq and Ahmed (2013) show the positive effect of customer motivation on customer trust in online banking. Similarly, Bulut and Karabulut (2018) found the positive effect of customer motivation on online customer trust. Kim *et al.* (2019) tested the effects of customer motivation and customer trust in tourism crowdfunding behaviour and found positive impact of customer motivation on customer trust. This implies that the businesses could offer products and services that appeal to customers' motivation such as security, pleasure, helping others and providing benefits, which will increase customer trust. Accordingly, in this study, the customer motivation is applied as an antecedent of customer trust in the local tourism context, revisiting this relationship again in a crisis situation. Based on the discussion above, the following hypothesis is posed:

*H2.* There is a positive influence of customer motivation on customer trust in local tourism during pandemic crisis.

The positive effect of customer trust on repurchase intention has been considerably studied (Gao, 2011; Check and Ho, 2016; Muhammad *et al.*, 2017; Rita *et al.*, 2019). Check and Ho (2016) found a positive relationship of customer trust and repurchase intentions. Likewise, Rita *et al.* (2019) found a positive relationship between trust and repurchase intentions in online shopping. Muhammad *et al.* (2017) mention that trust is essential in developing repurchase intentions in the airline business. Gao (2011) also found that when customers have a high level of trust, they are more likely to have intention to repurchase. Trust plays an important role in repurchase intention because it establishes a long-term relationship between customer and business (Kim *et al.*, 2009). Hence, the existing literature encourages the following hypothesis:

*H3.* There is a positive influence of customer trust on repurchase intentions in local tourism during pandemic crisis.

### 3.4 Customer loyalty

One of the key principles for tourism and marketing research is customer loyalty. It involves customers' purchases and repurchases of specific brands and products (Wen and Huang, 2019). Thakur (2016) describes loyalty as repeated purchase as a result of psychological processes that emerge from commitment. Generally, loyalty is created when the customer perceives value from the company (Reichheld and Sassor, 1990). The components of customer loyalty are discussed several studies. For instance, Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) mention that loyalty can be divided into two components, which are attitude and behaviour. The attitude is linked to a psychological aspect that is associated with opinion and willingness to buy in the future while the behaviour is associated with repetitive purchasing behaviour. On the contrary, Oliver (1999) proposed the four-stage loyalty model. In four sections, he distinguishes loyalty that is cognitive, affective, conative and action. The cognitive loyalty is the milestone at which a customer perceives product value and service quality. The affective loyalty is a phase in which a customer is satisfied with the product or service. The conative loyalty is a stage in which the consumer has commitment and intended to purchase product and service. The action loyalty is a stage when the customer expresses repurchase behaviour.

The positive effect of customer motivation on customer loyalty has been extensively examined in the field of tourism and marketing (Sato *et al.*, 2016; Wen and Huang, 2019; Yoon and Uysal,

2005). [Yoon and Uysal \(2005\)](#) found the positive relationship of both push and pull motivation towards loyalty. [Wen and Huang \(2019\)](#) found that tourist motivation is an antecedent of customer loyalty. [Sato et al. \(2016\)](#) also found the relationship between tourist motivation and loyalty. This is because customer motivation is a key aspect that drives customer loyalty. In the tourism context, if the local tourism businesses offer rewards that appeal to local tourists' motivations, the local tourists' motivation will be increased and more motivated to loyal to the local businesses. Consequently, this study applies both push and pull into one motivation factor to examine reason of their travel motivation and relationship to loyalty factor. The relationship of local tourists' motivation and loyalty to the country's destinations in Thailand is still fascinating, because now the relationship is in different circumstances. Research on motivation and loyalty of local tourists is lacking for a situation like the pandemic crisis. Therefore, this study proposes:

*H4.* There is a positive influence of customer motivation on customer loyalty in local tourism during pandemic crisis.

Trust is regarded as a critical concept in the extant literature for developing long-term relationships between customer and businesses ([Singh and Sirdeshmukh, 2000](#); [Pratiminingsih et al., 2013](#); [Tahir et al., 2021](#)). Several studies found the positive relationship between customer trust and customer loyalty. For example, [Morgan and Hunt \(1994\)](#) found that trust plays an important role in enhancing business competitive advantage, including customer loyalty. [Chu \(2009\)](#) tested the model of customer trust, perceived value and customer loyalty, and found relationships with both constructs. [Iglesias et al. \(2020\)](#) found that customer trust has a significant influence in the ability of corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices to enhance customer loyalty. The relationship between customer trust and loyalty is reinforced by reciprocal benefits between parties. Trust impacts loyalty through influencing the customer's sense of value congruence with the businesses. When there is perceived value similarity with the businesses and the customer, the customer's embeddedness in a relationship is increased, fostering reciprocity and contributing to the loyalty ([Sirdeshmukh et al., 2015](#)). Most prior studies have focused on the relationship of customer trust and loyalty in a normal situation, while this study examines the relationship of customer trust and loyalty of local tourists who travel locally during the pandemic period. Based on the foregoing review of existing literature, the following hypothesis is posed:

*H5.* There is a positive influence of customer trust and customer loyalty in local tourism during pandemic crisis.

In general, businesses have to find ways to improve customer loyalty. This is because it is one of the most effective ways to increase the customers' repurchase intentions ([Kim et al., 2009](#)). [Bansal et al. \(2004\)](#) indicate that businesses can employ the level of customer loyalty in forecasting the level of repurchase intentions. There are a number of studies on the influences of customer loyalty on repurchase intentions that have found a positive relationship between these two factors ([Bansal et al., 2004](#); [Kang et al., 2004](#); [Meng et al., 2011](#); [Upamannu et al., 2015](#)). [Sierra and McQuitty \(2005\)](#) mention that the underlying reason of such positive influences of customer loyalty on repurchase intentions can be enlightened by the theory of social exchange. This is because customer loyalty leads to repurchase products and services, promotes favourable word-of-mouth and suggests them to others ([Gronholdt et al., 2000](#)). As a result, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

*H6.* There is a positive influence of customer loyalty on repurchase intentions of local tourists travelling in Thailand during the pandemic crisis.

Most prior related studies found that customer loyalty can work as mediator variable of the relationship between motivation, trust and repurchase intention ([Upamannu et al., 2015](#); [Choe and Hsu, 2016](#); [Muhammad et al., 2017](#); [Bulut and Karabulut, 2018](#)). It is because customer loyalty can close the gap between business activities and actions to its customers such as motivation and

trust, and customer behaviour on repurchase intention (Thakur, 2016). In addition, the influence of customer motivation and trust on repurchase intention moderated by customer loyalty can also be explained by using the social exchange theory (Chuang, 2010). For example, Choe and Hsu (2016) used the social exchange theory to explain customer relational evaluation (customer trust) and customer emotional evaluation (repurchase intention) of online customer, finding that customer loyalty can mediate the influence of customer trust and repurchase intention of online shopping. Moreover, Bulut and Karabulut (2018) found that customer loyalty has a mediation in the relationship between customer motivation of word-of-mouth and online repurchase intention. However, Yi and La (2004) found that customer loyalty cannot mediate the effect of customer trust on repurchase intention. Therefore, to demonstrate inconclusive results of previous literature, this study hypothesises that:

- H7. Customer loyalty mediates the influence of customer motivation and customer trust on repurchase intention in local tourism during pandemic crisis.

#### 4. Methods

To examine the causal factors of customer motivation, trust and loyalty influencing the level of repurchase intentions of local tourists travelling in Thailand, the population of this study comprised all Thai local tourists who on travel in Thailand. Using simple random sampling, 500 cases to be sampled were allocated to the five parts of Thailand: Northern Thailand, North-Eastern Thailand, Central Thailand, Southern Thailand and the greater Bangkok area.

The study was quantitative research using online questionnaire. The online questionnaire was composed and distributed on Facebook by using Google Forms. To screen Thai local tourists before answering to the online questionnaire, the first page of Google Forms indicated two questions, which are (1) are you Thai and (2) which part of Thailand is your most favourite travel, using five multiple choices as Northern Thailand, North-Eastern Thailand, Central Thailand, Southern Thailand and the greater Bangkok. Moreover, Google Forms were desired to limit only 100 respondents in each part of Thailand; therefore, total samples of this study were 500 respondents. The questionnaire used in this study was adapted from prior related studies by Solomon (2018), Sierra and McQuitty (2005), and Upamannyu *et al.* (2015). There were five main parts in the questionnaire, including (1) demographical information of tourist such as age, gender, job of tourist, travel frequency, travel period and travelling member; (2) motivation (four questions); (3) customer loyalty (four questions); (4) customer trust (four questions); and (5) repurchase intentions (four questions) (Appendix). From the second part to the last part of the questionnaire, a Likert scale with five levels (1 = lowest, 2 = low, 3 = medium, 4 = high, and 5 = highest) was used to indicate the levels of motivation, customer trust, loyalty and repurchase intentions in domestic Thai tourism. A summary of the type of data records is given in Table 1.

The data were analysed by path analysis of structural equation model using the M-plus Statistics Software Program. The averages and standard deviations were taken into consideration. The averages of interval scales were labelled as follows (Srisa-ard, 2010): 1.00 to 1.50 is the lowest level, 1.51 to 2.50 is a low level, 2.51 to 3.50 is a moderate level, 3.51 to 4.50 is a high level and 4.51 to 5.00 is the highest level. Furthermore, correlation matrix was assessed to detect potential

Table 1 Variables measured		
Variable	Symbol	Measurement scale
Repurchase intention	INTENT	Five-level Likert scale
Customer motivation	MOTIVA	Five-level Likert scale
Customer loyalty	LOYAL	Five-level Likert scale
Customer trust	TRUST	Five-level Likert scale

multicollinearity among all the variables used in this study. Finally, path analysis was used to examine the candidate causal factors customer motivation, trust and loyalty for influencing the level of repurchase intentions of local tourists travelling in Thailand. The equation for testing the study hypotheses was:

$$\text{INTENT} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{MOTIVA} + \beta_2 \text{LOYAL} + \beta_3 \text{LOYAL} + \varepsilon$$

## 5. Findings and discussion

Based on the 500 questionnaire responses, from 100 tourists visiting each part of Thailand (Northern, North-Eastern, Central, Southern and Bangkok), [Table 2](#) shows demographical information of respondents. As seen from the results, for example, average age of respondents was 31.478 years (SD = 9.536), while average travel frequency was 5.551 times per year (SD = 4.698), with 3.180 average days per period (SD = 1.640). In terms of categorical demographic information, there were 283 females (56.60%), while another 217 respondents (43.40%) were male. The most common status of respondents was single (346 people as 69.20%), followed by married status (131 people as 26.60%), and widow (23 people as 4.60%). The most common member to travel together was family (229 people as 45.80%), followed by friend (132 people as 26.40%), couple (106 people as 21.20%) and solo (16 people as 3.20%). Finally, there were 175 private officers (35%), 170 government officers (34%), 79 students (15.80%), business owners (9%) and three farmers (0.60%).

[Table 3](#) indicates the level, mean and standard deviation of variables used in this study consisting of customer motivation (mean = 3.9800, and SD = 0.5589), customer trust (mean = 4.0534, and SD = 0.5701), customer loyalty (mean = 4.0527, and SD = 0.5965) and repurchase intentions of Thai domestic tourism (mean = 4.0739, and SD = 0.6572), which are on high levels. Before conducting a path analysis, the assumption that the data are not multicollinear was first tested. [Table 3](#) is also the correlation matrix used to test for multicollinearity between the variables used in this study, consisting of one dependent variable and three independent variables. An individual correlation should not exceed 0.800, and the variables used in this study satisfy this requirement with the highest Pearson correlation being 0.759 between INTENT and LOYAL. From the

**Table 2** Demographical information of respondents

Variables	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Medium
Age	31.478	9.536	15.000	69.000	22.000
Travel frequency	5.551	4.698	0.500	45.000	3.000
Travel period	3.180	1.640	1.000	20.000	3.000

**Table 3** Descriptive analysis and correlation matrix

Variables	INTENT	LOYAL	TRUST	MOTIVA
INTENT	1	0.759**	0.713**	0.638**
LOYAL	–	1	0.631**	0.558**
TRUST	–	–	1	0.651**
MOTIVA	–	–	–	1
MEAN	4.0739	4.0527	4.0534	3.9800
SD	0.6572	0.5965	0.5701	0.5589
MAX.	5.0000	5.0000	5.0000	5.0000
MIN.	2.0000	2.0000	2.2500	2.1300
Medium	4.0000	5.0000	4.0000	4.0000

Note(s): \*\* is significant at 0.01 level, and \* is significant at 0.05 level



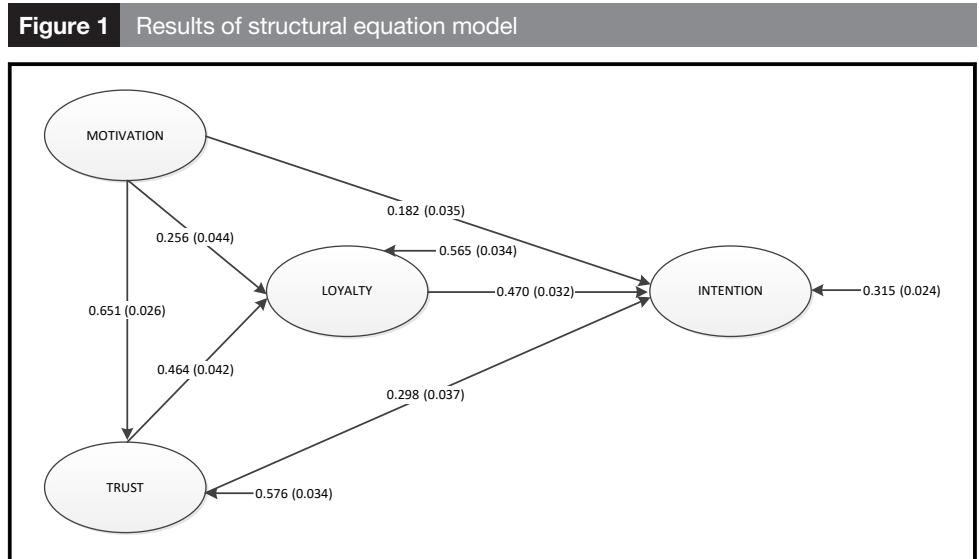
correlation coefficients between the four variables used in this study, there were significant positive correlations between INTENT, MOTIVA, LOYAL and TRUST at 0.01 level.

Before assessing the hypothesized path, the model was independently tested (Table 4). The results of structural equation model revealed that the model was a good fit with the data (chi-square = 33.170, chi-square/df = 3.685, RMSEA = 0.074, CFI = 0.989, TLI = 0.975 and SRMR = 0.017). In addition, all paths were significant at 0.05 level ( $p < 0.05$ ). All predictor variables, namely, MOTIVA, TRUST and LOYAL, were able to explain about 31.5% of total variance in INTENT (Figure 1).

The model is assessed in relation H1 to H6 in Figure 1. The path analysis from MOTIVA to LOYAL in H1 was supported ( $b = 0.256$ , sig = 0.044\*), TRUST to LOYAL in H2 was supported ( $b = 0.464$ , sig = 0.042\*), LOYAL to INTENT in H3 was supported ( $b = 0.470$ , sig = 0.032\*), MOTIVA to INTENT in H4 was supported ( $b = 0.182$ , sig = 0.035\*), TRUST to INTENT in H5 was supported ( $b = 0.298$ , sig = 0.037\*) and MOTIVA to TRUST in H6 was also supported ( $b = 0.651$ , sig = 0.026\*). Thus, all the hypotheses (H1–H7) were supported in this study.

According to the results, customer motivation has a positive influence on customer loyalty in local tourism during pandemic crisis similarity with the related literature of Wen and Huang (2019) and Yoon and Uysal (2005). This is because although there is a crisis like a pandemic, customer motivation that combines push and pull motivations into a unidimensional construct still plays an important role in enhancing customer loyalty. Sierra and McQuitty (2005) found positive emotion as a core feature in the social exchange process in increasing brand loyalty. The greater the customer

Fit indicator	Acceptable fit threshold (n > 250, K < 12)	Fit indicator for current model (n = 487, K < 12)
Chi-square	–	33.170
Df	–	9
Chi-square/df	< 3	3.685
RMSEA	< 0.07 with CFI > 0.92	0.074
CFI	> 0.95	0.989
TLI	> 0.95	0.975
SRMR	< 0.08 with CFI > 0.92	0.017



motivation is in local tourism, therefore, the stronger customer loyalty is in the local tourism businesses.

The study found that customer trust has a positive influence on customer loyalty in the local tourism context. The result is consistent with the prior literature (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Chu, 2009). The result indicates that when there is customer trust, it can generate customer loyalty even in a difficult situation like during a pandemic. This phenomenon can be explained by the social exchange theory, which is based on the relationship of two or more actors that compare between rewards and costs (Homans, 1958). In a similar manner, trust is built on the relationship between two or more actors in terms of reciprocal benefits and activities, and then the loyalty will be established when the actor receives rewards and is satisfied with another party. In the Thai local tourism context, trust plays a key role in the tourism sector. This is because if the tourists trust in the quality of places and products as well as the service providers and businesses to deliver their products and services as promised, they will express loyal behaviour: spread positive word-of-mouth, recommend to others and tend to revisit places and purchase the products and services again.

The result of positive influence of customer loyalty on repurchase intentions among local tourists in Thailand during the crisis is similar with the previous studies (Bansal *et al.*, 2004; Kang *et al.*, 2004; Meng *et al.*, 2011; Sierra and McQuitty, 2005; Upamannyu *et al.*, 2015). The result confirms that customer loyalty plays a vital role as a precursor to repurchase intentions. Whence customers have loyalty, they will support the businesses (Kim *et al.*, 2019). This is aligned with the theory of social exchange in terms of the outcome of social exchange producing positive emotions and a bond between customer and service provider (Lawler, 2001). The more positive emotions and bonds customers have, the more loyalty to the products, services and brands that will be expressed in supporting behaviours, including repurchase intentions.

Despite a crisis situation like the pandemic across the world, the empirical findings confirm a positive influence of customer motivation on repurchase intentions among the local tourists travelling in Thailand. The result is in agreement with previous literature (Crompton, 1979; Jang *et al.*, 2009; Prayag, 2012). For example, Fodness (1994) mentions that the customer travel motivation functions as the driving force of customer behaviour, the results of this study also indicate that customer motivation functions as the driving force for customer repurchase intentions. As the repurchase intention follows customer evaluation of its value, based on their past experiences for comparing costs and benefits, this process is in accordance with the social exchange behaviour in terms of comparing between reward and punishment (Tittenbrun, 2012). In the local tourism context, local tourists have evaluated costs and benefits of their travel based on their past experiences. When their past experiences reflect a positive outcome, it has an effect on their repurchase intentions. The results imply that local tourism business should be focused on the motivational factor to attract customers to visit the places and support the businesses in every situation.

The positive influence of customer trust on repurchase intention of this study is consistent with prior related literature (Kim *et al.*, 2009; Gao, 2011; Check and Ho, 2016; Muhammad *et al.*, 2017; Rita *et al.*, 2019). The result confirms that when the customers have a high level of trust, their repurchase intentions are stronger. The result also reveals the importance of trust towards repurchase intentions in local tourism context during a pandemic crisis, filling a knowledge gap in the literature. In comparison with other industries, the interconnect of customer trust and customer repurchase intentions is the same in the tourism industry. This implies that local tourism businesses should build trust of the customers. Once they have trust in the local tourism businesses, they tend to have repurchase of products in the future. This is a long-term relationship between customer and local tourism businesses. The ways to build trust in the local tourism context are such as delivering products as promised, offering products and services with consistent quality. The underlying theory in explaining this interconnect between these two constructs is the social exchange theory, in terms of the interaction of customer being initiated when the expectations are satisfied (Homans, 1958). If the local tourism businesses can deliver products and services with good quality as promised, this will meet the expectations of the customers and make them trust the business and want to support it.

The result of positive relationship between customer motivation and customer trust of this study is consistent the previous literature (Akhlaq and Ahmed, 2013; Kim *et al.*, 2019). The result implies that if it were a pandemic crisis, the customer motivation still has an effect on customer trust. The more customer motivation in local travel, the more customer trust in the local tourism. In Thailand, the government has launched assistant policies and promotional campaigns during the pandemic to support Thai local travel businesses by encouraging Thai tourists to travel within the kingdom. These policies and campaigns appear to be a part of customer motivation to attract them to travel locally. Furthermore, other contributing components are security, attraction, safety, hygiene, review and social relationship, which combine into customer motivation synergetic with customer trust, and that strengthens their trust to travel locally as tourists during even a crisis time. This goes along with the social exchange theory, in that the action will appear when there is reciprocity between the actors (Homans, 1961). In the local tourism context, when local tourism businesses offer benefits to customers, they will gain trust from the customers in return.

From the results of positive influence of customer motivation, customer trust and customer loyalty on repurchase intention of local tourists in Thailand during COVID-19 situation, the finding can demonstrate that Thai government's policies and campaigns such as "We travel together", "Share happiness through travel" and "Pay half" can increase travel frequency of local tourists to travel in Thailand. Moreover, the finding can also proof that the strategies of tourism industry in Thailand about customer motivation, customer trust and customer loyalty can boot up repurchase intention of Thai local tourists. Therefore, these factors are still about to play an important role to support Thai tourism industry during COVID-19 crisis.

## 6. Conclusion and suggestion for further study

The two main research questions posed were as follows: (1) what is the level of customer motivation, trust, loyalty and repurchase intentions of the local tourists travelling in Thailand during the coronavirus crisis and (2) are there influences of customer motivation, trust and loyalty on repurchase intentions among local tourists who travel in the country. The study found that motivation trust, customer trust, customer loyalty and repurchase intentions of Thai domestic tourism were all on high levels. In addition, there were significant positive influences from customer motivation, trust and loyalty on the level of repurchase intentions of local tourists travelling in Thailand.

The study provides several theoretical and practical contributions. Regarding the theoretical contributions, firstly, the study results demonstrate that the social exchange theory can be used to explain the influences of customer motivation, customer trust and loyalty on repurchase intentions of domestic Thai tourism. Moreover, the findings of this study extend the knowledge of customer motivation, customer trust, customer loyalty and repurchase intentions to the special conditions during the COVID-19 crisis. As regards the practical contributions, this study supports the policies and campaigns by Thai government to heal and support tourism industry, to recover from COVID-19 stresses since 2020. The tourism industry consists of accommodation, transportation, food and beverage, travel, souvenirs and products, and other related businesses, and can use the study findings to develop and improve their customer motivation, loyalty and trust, because these positively influence repurchase intentions, i.e. having loyal repeat customers. Finally, Thai local tourists may feel safe and trust tourism in Thailand during the pandemic.

However, the study suffers from some limitations. Firstly, there were only three independent variables used in this study, namely, customer motivation, customer trust, and customer loyalty, while there are other customer behavioural variables that may affect re-purchase intentions of local Thai tourists such as service quality and/or other marketing tools. Secondly, this study focused on only Thailand, while there are other international tourist destinations in Asia, such as Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines, South Korea or Japan. Finally, the time period addressed in this study was affected by the COVID-19 crisis. Therefore, as suggestions for future studies, other marketing and customer behavioural variables could be tested not only in Thailand, but also at other regional destinations for global tourism.

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## Appendix Questionnaire

### Section 1: Demographical information of tourist

1. Age	.....	Years old		
2. Travel frequency	.....	Times per year		
3. Travel period	.....	Days per time		
4. Gender	...	Female	... Male	
5. Status	...	Single	... Married	... Widow
6. Job	...	Private officers	... Students	... Business owners
	...	Government officers	... Farmers	... The others
7. Travelling Member	...	Family	... Friend	... Couple
	...	Solo	... The others	

### Section 2–5: Customer motivation, trust, loyalty and repurchase intention

Variables	Level				
	5	4	3	2	1
<b>1. Customer motivation</b>					
1.1 I choose to travel here because I have searched for information such as reviews, blogs and other information on the internet					
1.2 I choose to travel here in order to strengthen the relationship such as family members, friend or couple					
1.3 I choose to travel here because of government policies and campaigns such as “We travel together”, “Share happiness through travel” and “Pay half”					
1.4 I choose to travel here because of safety and hygiene place by Amazing Thailand Safety and Health Administration (SHA)					
<b>2. Customer trust</b>					
2.1 I feel comfortable to travel in Thailand					
2.2 Travelling in Thailand always delivers on its promises in terms of products and services					
2.3 Travelling in Thailand offers unwavering quality in products and services					
2.4 Travelling in Thailand is a trusted choice					
<b>3. Customer loyalty</b>					
3.1 I think that travelling in Thailand is the best					
3.2 I feel good to travel in Thailand more than travelling in other places					
3.3 I will spread a positive word-or-mouth about travelling in Thailand					
3.4 I will recommend other people to travel to Thailand					
<b>4. Repurchase intention</b>					
4.1 I will pay for travelling in Thailand again					
4.2 I will travel in Thailand again in the future					
4.3 I intend to travel in Thailand continually					
4.4 I intend to travel in Thailand more than other places					

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