

# Loyalty Model for the Nawatwithi OTOP Tourism Communities in Lower Northeastern Provinces S2 Cluster

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## Abstract

The ‘Nawatwithi’ OTOP tourism communities are established from the integration of the identity, ways of life, heritage of wisdom and innovations based on changes. They also utilize the potentials of the communities in terms of image, perceived value, attractiveness, and satisfaction to link to domestic tourism in order to support the community development so that loyalty has been established to the Nawatwithi OTOP tourism communities in the lower northeastern provinces S2 cluster. The objectives of this research were to: 1) study the levels of image, perceived value, attractiveness, satisfaction, and loyalty to the Nawatwithi OTOP tourism communities in the lower northeastern provinces S2 cluster; 2) examine influences of image, perceived value, attractiveness, satisfaction on the loyalty to the Nawatwithi OTOP tourism communities in the lower northeastern provinces S2 cluster; and 3) develop a model for developing the loyalty to the Nawatwithi OTOP tourism communities in the lower northeastern provinces S2 cluster. This research employed a mixed research methodology combining quantitative and qualitative methods. For the quantitative research part, the research sample consisted of 380 tourists and people who involved in tourism in the targeted villages according to the Nawatwithi OTOP Tourism Community Project of the lower northeastern province S2 cluster. The sample size was determined based on the criterion of 20 times the observed variables. They were selected via stratified sampling. Data were collected with the use of a questionnaire and analyzed with a structural equation model. As for the qualitative research component, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 key informants including experts and specialists involved in the Nawatwithi OTOP Tourism Community Project. Data were analyzed with analytic induction. The findings showed that: 1) image, perceived value, attractiveness, satisfaction, and loyalty to the Nawatwithi OTOP tourism communities in the lower northeastern provinces S2 cluster were rated at a high level; 2) image, perceived value, attractiveness, and satisfaction had a direct influence on the loyalty to the Nawatwithi OTOP tourism communities in the lower northeastern provinces S2 cluster, with a .05 level of statistical significance, and all of these factors could predict the results by 90 percent; and 3) the model for developing the loyalty to the Nawatwithi OTOP tourism communities in the lower northeastern provinces S2 cluster, developed by the researcher, was called the CSPE Model, consisting of C (referring to concern), S (referring to service); P (referring to place), and E (referring to experience). These findings focus on building strengths through inheriting local wisdom by conserving natural resources and creating activities that are amazing remarkable and unique in each community and transforming them into exciting and impressive attractions that can attract tourists to visit and experience ways of life and environments of the community. The findings also emphasize on the management of environment of tourist attractions so that they are clean, orderly and safe. These factors, together with the quality of service provided by local people in the community can create unforgettable experience to visitors which in turn leads to loyalty and repeat visits. This model of loyalty which is a result of this research can be used to develop other models more effectively.

**Keywords:** Destination image, perceived value, attraction, satisfaction, loyalty, Nawatwithi OTOP, tourism community.

## 1. Introduction

OTOP stands for One Tambon One Product which is a local entrepreneurship stimulus program (Chouichom, 2021) designed by Thailand's former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra during his 2001-2006 Thai Rak Thai government. It provides various business opportunities for the people living in various areas of Thailand. Most importantly, it has major importance for the people living in various local areas such as villages. Because this program of Thai government provide assistance to the people to start various business activities. The opportunities provided to the people to start income generating activities by the government of Thailand has important benefits to all the people. Because it helps the people come out from financial distress which led towards the welfare of the community. It has vital importance to promote the local communities with the help of providing several entrepreneurship opportunities (Akasarakul, Cooharajanane, & Lipikom, 2017) causing to improve the living standard of people. The previous studies also highlighted that this program of government has significant importance for the local people in Thailand (Akasarakul et al., 2017).

In various local areas, OTO is linked with tourism activities. Tourism is one of the most significant industries of Thailand which has major importance globally (Allchurch, Mehrotra, Carmody, Monchanin, & Scott, 2022). This industry has significant contribution for the people living in various local areas because with the help of tourism activities people can start entrepreneurship activities to generate income. Especially in various local areas where tourists visit to see the culture of the people can help the people to generate income generating activities with the help of government support. In several local areas the government of Thailand facilitate the people to start various entrepreneurship activities including unique product development at local areas along with the unique services which promote the tourism activities. It has dual benefits as it increases opportunities for tourism which has positive effect on tourism industry and it also has positive effect on the local people by generating various financial resources. The OTO program is also available in lower Northeastern province S2 cluster of Thailand. The OTO program in lower Northeastern province S2 cluster of Thailand also providing

various opportunities for the people living in this cluster to start various activities. These opportunities are related to the tourism activities. In this area the government facilitates various entrepreneurship activity through tourism which causes to increase the tourism opportunities and provide various benefits for the local people. In this area it is important to promote the image of various products and services as well as attraction, loyalty, satisfaction and perceived value (Malla & Brewin, 2020; Nursal et al., 2020; Rašidagić & Hesova, 2020).

To get maximum benefits from OTO program, it is important to enhance perceived value, attraction, satisfaction as well as loyalty in Northeastern province S2 cluster. In this cluster, government is supporting various entrepreneurship activities which require better satisfaction level for the tourist and to attract the tourist to improve loyalty among them. In this way, the perceived image development is most important. As highlighted by previous studies that perceived image is most important in tourism activities (Najjarzadeh, Asadi Zarch, & Azadvar, 2022; Tavitiyaman, Qu, Tsang, & Lam, 2021). To promote tourist perceived value, tourist attraction and tourist loyalty, it is important to promote perceived image. Therefore, this study proposes that perceived image has significant importance to enhance tourist satisfaction, loyalty, attraction as well as perceived value. Consequently, this study examined the relationship between destination image, perceived value, attraction, satisfaction and loyalty in Northeastern province S2 cluster. Number of studies in the literature addressed OTO (Anh, 2013; Pholpirul, Charoenrat, Kwanyou, Rukumnuaykit, & Srijamdee, 2020), however, Northeastern province S2 cluster is not considered by the earlier studies in Thailand. Finally, the objectives of this research include;

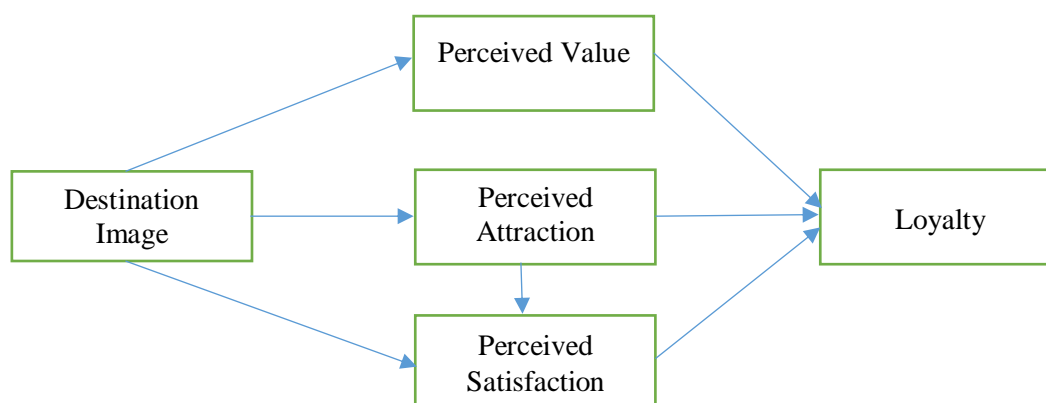
1. To study the levels of destination image, perceived value, attractiveness, satisfaction, and loyalty to the Nawatwithi OTO tourism communities in the lower Northeastern provinces S2 cluster.
2. To examine the influence of destination image on perceived value, attractiveness, satisfaction and loyalty to the Nawatwithi OTO tourism communities in the lower Northeastern provinces S2 cluster.

3. To develop a model for developing the loyalty to the Nawatwithi OTOP tourism communities in the lower Northeastern provinces S2 cluster.

## 2. Literature Review

The 'Nawatwithi' OTOP tourism communities are established from the integration of the identity, ways of life, heritage of wisdom and innovations based on changes. They also utilize the potentials of the communities in terms of

image, perceived value, attractiveness, and satisfaction to link to domestic tourism in order to support the community development so that loyalty has been established to the Nawatwithi OTOP tourism communities in the lower Northeastern provinces S2 cluster. In this direction, the current study proposed a model to enhance tourist loyalty with the help of destination image, perceived value, perceived attraction and perceived satisfaction (Kasalak & Dayar, 2020; Mehmet, 2020; Retnosari & Jayadi, 2020).



**Figure 2.** Framework of the study showing the relationship between destination image, perceived value, perceived attraction, perceived satisfaction and loyalty.

### 2.1 Destination Image

Image can be described as the perception of any individual towards any product or service of any organization. It is an individual's subjective perceptions of image. In the current study, image is considered in relation to the recognition. The recognition of the tourist towards the tourist opportunity is related to the perceived image or destination image. Destination image can also be formed with the help of experience, more the experience of a tourist towards any place develops the destination image (Mitskaya, 2020; Nalaka & Diunugala, 2020; Rezkalla, 2020; Rusman, 2020; Tlapana & Sandlana, 2021). Additionally, the priority of tourism activities in a certain area also has influence to develop image in the mind of tourist. Along with the recognition, experience as well as variety, the role of environment also can play a significant role. The development of destination image also depends on environment. Several previous studies identified that destination image has major importance in tourism activities (Tasci,

Uslu, Styliadis, & Woosnam, 2022; Tse & Tung, 2022).

### 2.2 Perceived Value

In business research, perceived value can be described as the individual's evaluation in relation to the different products or different services of any company that whether these services and products meet the need of an individual as well as expectations. Therefore, perceived value is the buyers' assessment of the qualities of a product or service, and its aptitude to meet their requirements and expectations, particularly in comparison with its peers.

In tourism industry the perceived value of tourist has significant importance to promote tourism activities (Anggraeni, Hurriyati, Wibowo, & Gaffar, 2022). In the current study, perceived value is considered in relation to the money value. Furthermore, it is also measured with the help of time value. Conservation value is also considered in relation to the perceived value. It indicates that the tourist visiting any place always think about the expenses to visit that

place and also consider the value of the time that how much time it will take to visit the specific place. Therefore, perceived value is usually linked with money value, time value as well as conservation value. According to the current study, destination image has relationship with perceived value. The destination image of tourist has positive role to influence perceived value. If the image contains positive elements, it will automatically increase the perceived value in positive way, however, negative image in the mind of tourist can decrease the perceived value towards any tourism opportunity. Literature highlighted that perceived image and perceived value has relationship with each other (Susilowati & Sugandini, 2018). Finally, it is hypothesized that;

**Hypothesis 1.** Destination image has positive effect on perceived image.

### 2.3 Perceived Attraction

The action or power of evoking interest in or liking for someone or something is called perceived attraction. Tourist attraction a similar with the customer attraction among various other industries. The tourist attraction has significant role in tourism activities and to promote tourism industry. Higher level of attraction in tourism activity increases the interest of tourist for the specific place. According to the current study, tourism attraction is based on community attraction. As the current study is dealing with the OTOP product in various local areas, therefore, the community attraction is most important. The attraction of the tourist related to the tourism activities also has important role to promote perceived attraction for local activities related to the heritage as well as culture. Additionally, the products as well as services produced with the help of OTOP program also causes to attract the tourists. Tourist attraction or perceived attraction in tourism is highlighted in other studies (Wang, Li, Zhen, & Zhang, 2016), however, it is really studied among the tourism industry in relation to the destination image. This study examined the effect of destination image on perceived attraction. Previous studies highlighted the relationship between image and tourist attraction (Kim & Kim, 2012). By considering the relationship of destination image and perceived attraction in the literature, the current study also proposed that destination

image has significant effect on perceived attraction. Hence, it is proposed that;

**Hypothesis 2.** Destination image has positive effect on perceived attraction.

### 2.4 Perceived Satisfaction

Perceived satisfaction can be described as the degree of ease involved in using any product or service. This study considered perceived satisfaction in relation to the quality of service and products related to the tourism. Furthermore, this study considered price and comfort received in relation to the price. Additionally, context and service are also involved in perceived satisfaction. Perceived satisfaction is considered in relation to the tourists which is also highlighted in previous studies (Kuo, Chang, Cheng, & Lin, 2016), but it is not addressed through destination image. The perceived satisfaction is influenced by the designation image. The better development of designation image can lead to increase in tourist satisfaction. Therefore, it is proposed that;

**Hypothesis 3.** Destination image has positive effect on perceived satisfaction.

### 2.5 Perceived Loyalty

Loyalty describes an ongoing emotional relationship between product or service of a company and customer. In this study, perceived loyalty is considered in relation to the tourist loyalty with any specific place or any other tourism activity. Loyalty is described as how many times a tourist visits a specific place or avail the tourism opportunity continuously. It is also based on the story described by the tourist in any tourism related activity and amount paid to avail the tourism opportunity. Tourists' loyalty is most important in tourism industry to promote tourism activities (Brandano, Osti, & Pulina, 2018). Therefore, loyalty of the tourist is based on its repeated intention to avail the tourism opportunities related to a specific area. This study proposed various factors which has significant influence on loyalty of the tourist. According to the current study, perceived value, received attraction and perceived satisfaction has significant role to promote perceived loyalty. By reviewing the literature, the current study proposed that perceived value, attraction and satisfaction has effect on loyalty. Therefore, following hypotheses are proposed;

**Hypothesis 4.** Perceived value has positive effect on loyalty.

**Hypothesis 5.** Perceived attraction has positive effect on loyalty.

**Hypothesis 6.** Perceived satisfaction has positive effect on loyalty.

**Hypothesis 7.** Perceived value mediates the relationship between destination image and loyalty.

**Hypothesis 8.** Perceived attraction mediates the relationship between destination image and loyalty.

**Hypothesis 9.** Perceived satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived attraction and loyalty.

**Hypothesis 10.** Perceived satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived value and loyalty.

### 3. Methodology

The nature of this study is suitable to adopt quantitative research approach because this study considered the relationship between destination image, perceived value, attraction, satisfaction and loyalty in Nawatwithi OTOP tourism communities in lower Northeastern provinces S2 Cluster, Thailand. Majorly, the literature addressed tourism perceived value, attraction, satisfaction and loyalty with the help of quantitative research approach. Additionally, perceived image in tourism is also examined through quantitative research. Therefore, this study adopted quantitative research majorly. However, to confirm the results from quantitative research, this study also employed qualitative research. Hence, mixed method

approach is used in this study to examine the effect of perceived image on perceived value, attraction, satisfaction and loyalty.

To apply quantitative research, this study proposed various hypotheses and tested with the help of statistical software. To test the hypotheses, this study designed a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire is designed by adopting scale items from previous studies to measure perceived image, perceived value, attraction, satisfaction and loyalty. The questionnaire was designed in two sections including demographic profile of respondents and scale items related to key study variables. Data collection is made through stratified sampling technique (Spencer, Tsangu, & Silo, 2017). Respondents of the study are the tourists in Northeastern provinces. The sample size was determined based on the criterion of 20 times the observed variables. The research sample consisted of 700 tourists and people who involved in tourism in the targeted villages according to the Nawatwithi OTOP tourism community project of the lower Northeastern province S2 cluster (Muller & de Klerk, 2020; Nkosi, 2020; Premporn Khemavuk, 2020). Therefore, 700 questionnaires were distributed among the tourists and 385 were returned. Five questionnaires were not useable because these questionnaires were not completed. Finally, 380 questionnaires were used in data analysis. Therefore, data were collected with the use of a questionnaire and analyzed through structural equation modeling (SEM). As for the qualitative research, in-depth interviews were conducted from 20 key informants including experts and specialists involved in the Nawatwithi OTOP tourism community project. Data statistics are highlighted in Table 1.

**Table1.** Statistical test of empirical variables (n=380)

ตัวแปร	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	%CV	SK	KU	$\chi^2$	P-value
Recogn	4.51	.62	13.83	-5.336	-2.143	33.070	.000
Experie	4.49	.61	13.67	-5.030	-2.355	33.849	.000
Variet	4.47	.58	13.04	-3.802	-3.470	26.496	.000
Enviro	4.47	.61	13.64	-4.554	-2.640	27.706	.000

Money	4.55	.60	13.16	-6.039	-1.494	38.704	.000
Time	4.47	.62	13.92	-4.894	-2.878	32.229	.000
Conser	4.55	.62	13.66	-6.317	-1.210	41.369	.000
Place	4.47	.65	14.49	-5.185	-2.282	32.090	.000
Activi	4.49	.58	12.99	-4.456	-3.030	29.036	.000
Food	4.53	.63	13.82	-5.705	-1.558	34.968	.000
Produc	4.47	.66	14.73	-4.762	-2.407	28.472	.000
Qualit	4.48	.63	13.99	-4.780	-2.237	27.854	.000
Price	4.43	.60	13.58	-3.703	-2.718	21.100	.000
Comfor	4.45	.62	13.85	-3.854	-2.641	21.827	.000
Context	4.46	.67	15.12	-5.340	-1.849	31.938	.000
Servic	4.55	.65	14.28	-6.702	-.510	45.181	.000
Repeat	4.48	.63	14.09	-5.130	-2.257	31.410	.000
Tell	4.39	.66	15.10	-4.011	-2.408	21.892	.000
Pay	4.48	.61	13.49	-4.883	-2.769	31.505	.000

#### 4. Data Analysis and Results

The current study employed most popular data analysis technique to examine the relationship between variables. In this study structural equation modelling (SEM) is used for data analysis (Chairatana, 2021; Hair et al., 2019). In this technique the confirmatory factor analysis is carried out before to examine the relationship between variables. In this process factor loading was examined. The factors must have factor loading above 0.4. However, the factors having loading below 0.4 must be deleted. The factor loading of the current study is given in Table 2 which shows that the factor loading is between

the acceptable range. Several previous studies considered factor loading between 0.4 to 0.6 which is acceptable value and also considered in the current study (Hassan et al., 2021; Monat & Doremus, 2020; Ngwenya & Nkosi, 2021). In this study, all the items have factor loading above 0.4. This study also examined reliability of the data which has the minimum threshold level of 0.7. Additionally, the current study also achieved convergent validity and discriminant validity.

**Table 2.** Factor Loadings (n = 380)

ตัวแปร	Factor Loading ( $\lambda$ )	Error ( $\theta$ )	t	R <sup>2</sup>
<b>1. Destination image (Image)</b>				
1.1 Recognize (Recogn)	.52	.73	9.27	.27
1.2 Experience (Experie)	.56	.69	9.81	.31

1.3 Variety (Variet)	.40	.84	7.49	.16
1.4 Environment (Enviro)	.45	.80	8.21	.20
$\rho_c = .65$ $\rho_v = .53$				
<b>2. Perceived Value (Value)</b>				
2.1 Money Value (Money)	.69	.52	9.87	.48
2.2 Time Value (Time)	.69	.53	13.54	.47
2.3 Conservation Value (Conser)	.90	.20	17.84	.80
$\rho_c = .81$ $\rho_v = .58$				
<b>3. Attraction (Attrac)</b>				
3.1 Community attractions (Place)	.56	.69	10.79	.31
3.2 Community tourism activities (Activi)	.42	.82	8.22	.18
3.3 Local Food (Food)	.48	.77	9.32	.23
3.4 OTOP Products (Produc)	.54	.71	10.42	.29
$\rho_c = .67$ $\rho_v = .55$				
<b>4. Satisfaction (Satisf)</b>				
4.1 Quality (Qualit)	.64	.59	10.43	.41
4.2 Price (Price)	.51	.74	8.06	.26
4.3 Comfort (Comfor)	.42	.83	7.79	.17
4.4 Context (Context)	.79	.37	17.14	.63
4.5 Service (Servic)	.86	.26	18.66	.74
$\rho_c = .79$ $\rho_v = .54$				
<b>5. Loyalty (Loyal)</b>				
5.1 Repeat (Repeat)	.67	.55	11.74	.45
5.2 Tell (Tell)	.53	.72	9.44	.28
5.3 Pay (Pay)	.52	.73	9.63	.27
$\rho_c = .62$ , $\rho_v = .53$				

In the next step, the current study considered the effect of destination image on perceived value, attraction, satisfaction and loyalty. T-value and beta value is considered to examine the relationship between variable (Hair, Hult, Ringle, Sarstedt, & Thiele, 2017; Khan et al., 2019). Therefore, this study examined the effect of destination image on perceived value. It is found that there is a significant relationship

between destination image and perceived value. The relationship between perceived image and attraction is also found significant. Moreover, the relationship is examined between destination image and satisfaction. It is found that perceived image has significant effect on satisfaction. Additionally, the relationship between destination image and loyalty is considered which is also significant. Therefore, these four

direct hypotheses are supported by the results of the current study. Furthermore, results of the study found that attraction has positive effect on satisfaction. The effect of satisfaction on loyalty is also significant (Haitao, 2020; Krysiński & Szczepański, 2020; Österberg & Nilsson, 2020). Relationship between perceived value and

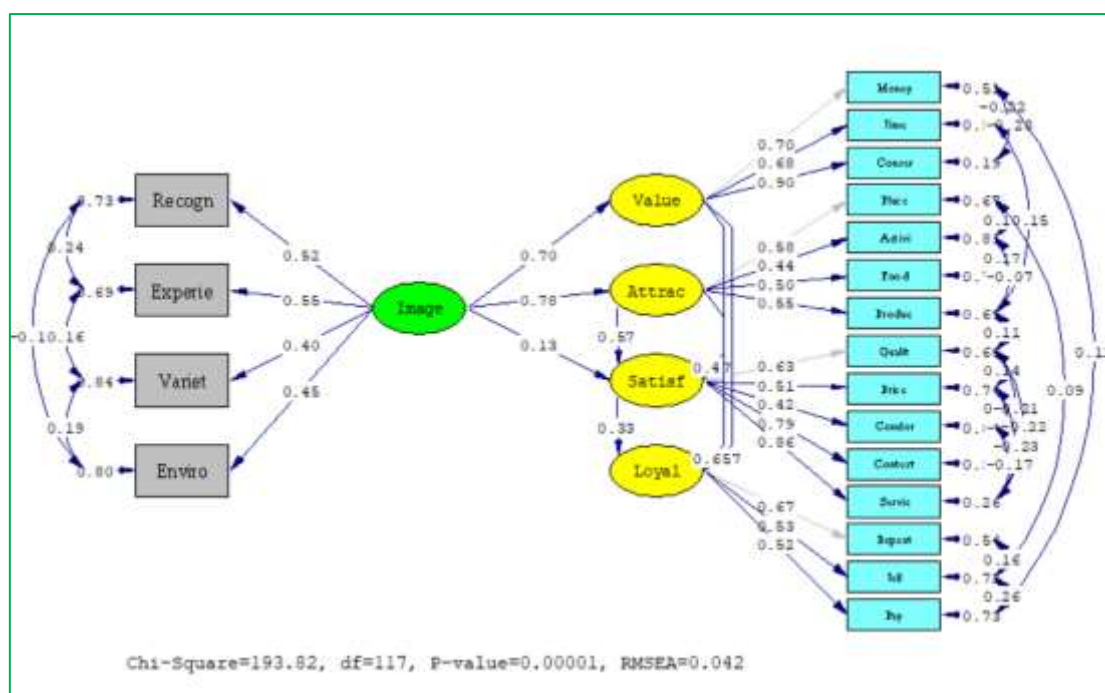
satisfaction is examined. It is found that received value has significant effect on satisfaction. The relationship between perceived value and loyalty is also significant. Results are given in Table 3 and SEM process is highlighted in Figure 2.

**Table 3.** Parameter estimation result of direct effect coefficient, indirect effect and total effect from adjust model (n=380)

Dependent variable	R <sup>2</sup>	Effect	Independent variable			
			Perceived Value	Attractiveness (Attrac)	Satisfaction (Satisf)	Destination image (Image)
Perceived Value	.50	DE	-	-	-	.70*(9.74)
		IE	-	-	-	-
		TE	-	-	-	.70*(9.74)
Attraction (Attrac)	.69	DE	-	-	-	.78*(12.28)
		IE	-	-	-	-
		TE	-	-	-	.78*(12.28)
Satisfaction (Satisf)	.59	DE	.47*(4.82)	.57*(3.74)	-	.13*(4.06)
		IE	-	-	-	.72*(4.69)
		TE	.47*(4.82)	.57*(3.74)	-	.85*(9.51)
Royalty (Loyal)	.90	DE	.37*(2.62)	.65*(4.97)	.33*(2.66)	-
		IE	.32*(4.76)	.29*(2.04)	-	.74*(11.60)
		TE	.69*(2.33)	.94*(6.55)	.33*(2.66)	.74*(11.60)

$\chi^2 = 193.82$  df = 117 p-value = .00001,  $\chi^2 / df = 1.65$ , RMSEA = .042, RMR = .018, SRMR = .046, CFI = .99, GFI = .95, AGFI = .92, CN = 298.27





**Figure 2.** Framework of the study showing the relationship between perceived image, perceived value, attraction, satisfaction and loyalty

## 5. Discussion

This study considered lower Northeastern provinces S2 cluster of Thailand to examined Nawatwithi OTOP tourism communities in relation to the destination image, perceived value, attraction, satisfaction and loyalty. By adopting mixed method approach, this study tested various hypotheses to achieve the study objective.

Findings of the study proves that perceived image can promote perceived value among the tourists. The increase in destination image can increase the perceived value. The role of perceived image in attraction of tourist is also positive. It indicates that increase in perceived image can increase the attraction among the tourists in Northeastern province. Additionally, study examined the role of destination image in satisfaction of tourists. It is found that perceived image has positive effect on satisfaction level of tourists. Therefore, the perceived image has most important role to enhance the satisfaction level of tourists which ultimately have positive effect to promote tourism activities in the province. It is also evident from the results that image can also play vital role in tourist loyalty. The tourist loyalty can be increased through the development of better destination image.

Therefore, the study found that tourist perceived image effect on perceived value, tourist attraction, tourist satisfaction and tourist loyalty. These results also have similar in relation to the previous studies. As previous studies also found the significant relationship between destination image, perceived value, attraction and satisfaction as well as loyalty (Allameh, Pool, Jaberi, Salehzadeh, & Asadi, 2015; Khuong & Phuong, 2017; Meng, Liang, & Yang, 2011). Thus, the results of this study are in line with the previous studies. Additionally, this study also considered the effect of attraction on satisfaction and found that attraction has positive effect on satisfaction which shows that increase in the level of attraction among tourists can increase the satisfaction level. Therefore, increase in satisfaction level can increase the tourist loyalty in any area. Finally, it is also observed that tourism activities can be promoted with the help of perceived value as perceived value has positive effect on the level of tourist's loyalty.

## 6. Conclusion

The findings of the study proved that; destination image, perceived value, attractiveness, satisfaction, and loyalty to the

Nawatwithi OTOP tourism communities in the lower Northeastern provinces S2 cluster has major importance for tourism activities. It is observed that destination image has direct effect on tourists perceived value, attractiveness, satisfaction and loyalty to the Nawatwithi OTOP tourism communities in the lower Northeastern provinces. The model for developing the loyalty in Northeastern provinces S2 cluster developed by the study and named as CSPE Model. In this model; C referring to concern, S referring to service, P referring to place, and E referring to experience. These findings focus on building strengths through inheriting local wisdom by conserving natural resources and creating activities that are amazing remarkable and unique in each community and transforming them into exciting and impressive attractions that can attract tourists to visit and experience ways of life as well as environments of the community. The findings also emphasize on the management of environment of tourist attractions so that they are clean, orderly and safe. These factors, together with the quality of service provided by local people in the community can create unforgettable experience to visitors which in turn leads to loyalty and continuous visits. The model developed by the current study can be used to develop other models more effectively.

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