

ANTECEDENT AND OUTCOME OF PLACE ATTACHMENT IN HERITAGE SITES

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on attachment theory as the foundation theory in examining the antecedent and outcome of place attachment among local tourists of heritage sites. Data was collected from local tourists who visited heritage sites in Melaka and George Town by using judgemental sampling through questionnaire. A total of 396 respondents completed the questionnaire. Structural equation model was used to analyze data and test the hypothesis. This study reveals new findings whereby cultural motivation positively influences each of the four dimensions of place attachment. However, only place dependence and affective attachments were found positively influencing intention to recommend. Destination managers are encouraged to enhance tourists' attachment (place dependence and affective attachment) by providing knowledge and information, especially to culturally motivated tourists. Recommendations for future studies are also discussed to overcome the limitations of this study.

KEYWORDS: *Cultural motivation, place attachment, intention to recommend, heritage site, tourism*

INTRODUCTION

Currently, place attachment is a vital concept in the tourism literature (Prayag, Chen, & Del Chiappa, 2017). Attachment can be formed between individuals and buildings, environments, households, objects, sceneries, neighbourhoods, cities and towns (Cresswell, 2004). Place attachment is a process in which an individual constructs his or her notions of place and form an affective bond to places (Gifford, 2002). This concept develops from attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969). Attachment theory is a psychological theory that defines attachment as an affection bond between an infant and an attachment figure such as the mother (Bowlby, 1969). That is, being attached to people or places seems to happen naturally to individuals. As a result, the attachment concept has also been adapted into other contexts to represent different bonding, includes person-to-place (Chen, Dwyer, & Firth, 2014). This has led tourism researchers to also adapt the attachment theory in the tourism context to understand tourists' behaviour.

Several studies have examined antecedents of place attachment such as destination image (Prayag & Ryan, 2012), destination attractiveness (Veasna, Wu, & Huang, 2013) and authenticity (Jiang et al., 2016). It is known that tourists' attachment is influenced by the desire to satisfy specific needs. Motivation is triggered by unfulfilled needs (Budruk & Stanis, 2013) suggesting that cultural needs could be the motivation of the tourists in visiting a destination and may end up attaching to the destination as the bonding develops. Nevertheless, there are limited studies that assess the relationship between motivation specifically cultural related motives and place attachment (Prayag et al., 2017). Therefore, it serves as the first research gap for this study to examine the relationship between cultural motivation and place attachment. The second literature gap relates to the fact that most studies analyse place attachment at its higher-order construct level (Ramkissoon, Smith, &

Weiler, 2013; Prayag et al., 2017). However, this study fills the gap by analysing place attachment at its dimensional level because individual attachment dimension may bring different impact to tourists' behavioural outcome.

Third research gap identified was limited studies conducted in understanding the behavioural intention in cultural heritage sites (Yuksel, Yuksel, & Bilim, 2010). Cultural heritage sites have a lot of cultural knowledge and experiences to offer and these interactions may have created bonding differently from non-cultural sites. Therefore, the concept of attachment becomes more relevant in cultural heritage sites, where more research attention is needed. Several studies have examined the outcomes of place attachment such as engagement (Bryce et al., 2015), revisit frequency (Tsai, 2012) and satisfaction (Yuksel et al., 2010). Literature seems to demonstrate limited studies using intention to recommend as the outcome variable. Intention to recommend seems more relevant in the context of local tourists, who might not revisit the same destination in the near future but they could recommend the destination to family and friends, as they know local destinations are affordable to family and friends. Therefore, this study focuses on measuring intention to recommend as the outcome variable to capture the essence of how attachment level drives tourists to recommend the destination, as they may want their attached destination achieves successes it deserves.

Melaka and George Town Heritage Sites

Melaka is located on the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia, bordered by State of Negeri Sembilan to the north, State of Johor to the South and Straits of Malacca to the west while George Town is located in Penang Island and is the State capital of Penang. Melaka and George Town are historic colonial cities on the Straits of Malacca that exhibit interactions and influences between the East and the West rising from their former function as the international trading ports. Both cities have numerous historic residential, commercial and religious buildings in their heritage sites. In 2008, Melaka and George Town were declared as the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory is an influential psychological theory. It describes attachment as an affection bond between an infant and an attachment figure (Bowlby, 1969). The infant's initial mental representation of the self and others is formed by the experience with the attachment figure (Mennen & O' Keefe, 2005). This mental representation results as the indicator in forming the infant's expectations, behaviours and interpreting social surroundings. Later, this theory was used to develop the concept of place attachment. This concept is not a newly developed concept but its application to understand the affectionate bond between tourists and the visited destination is fairly recent (Chen et al., 2014).

Place Attachment

The literature recommends examining place attachment as a multi-dimensional construct because it provides a better understanding of its linkages with other constructs as compared to examining using a uni-dimensional construct (Ramkissoon et al., 2013). Basing on this recommendation, this study uses four dimensions namely; place dependence, place identity, affective attachment and social bond to measure place attachment.

Place dependence reflects on how well a setting (e.g. tourism destination) facilitates users' particular activities such as tourism activities (Moore & Graefe, 1994). Cultural properties offer individuals the opportunity to reflect on the importance of such properties needed to conduct anticipated activities and compare with other substitutes (Ramkissoon, 2015). Place identity is a personal cognitive identity affiliated with the place and can be referred as a symbolic value of a place (Williams & Vaske, 2003). It signifies congruity between an individual's self-concept and a place (Jiang, Ramkissoon, & Mavondo,

2015). Destinations with cultural properties offer individuals the opportunity to identify themselves with distinctive surroundings (Ramkissoon et al., 2013).

Affective attachment is conceptualized as an affective bond between an individual and a particular environment (Debenedetti et al., 2014). It refers to the affective relationship between individuals and a place that goes beyond cognition, preferences or judgments (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001). Cultural spaces provide opportunity among individuals to build their sentiments and give meanings (Ramkissoon, 2015). Finally, social bond reflects on emotional bond produced from interpersonal interaction between individuals and the environment (Kyle, Graefe, & Manning, 2005). Place attachment develops when individuals develop communal bonds with other people such as local residents and travelling members. In other words, place attachment to a destination is also socially driven (Hammitt, Backlund, & Bixler 2006).

Cultural Motivation

Cultural motivation consists of a series of cultural purposes and not an absolute and exclusive property for serious cultural tourists only because it is also noticed in less serious cultural tourists (McIntosh, 2004). There are three main reasons for understanding motivation among tourists. First, motives are the basis for designing destinations' products and services for tourists. Second, it directly relates to assessment by tourists on their subsequent actions. Third, it permits destinations' marketers and agencies to comprehend decision processes among tourists (Crompton & McKay, 1997).

Past studies use a mixture of basic and specific motives to measure cultural motivation among the Romanesque sites' tourists. It includes items of "relax mentally, discover new places and things, be in a calm atmosphere, increase knowledge, have a good time with friends, visit cultural attractions or events, visit historical attractions or events, interest in history and religious motivation" (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010, 657). The same measurement is also used to understand the domestic tourists' behaviour at Japanese heritage sites (Bryce et al., 2015). On the other hand, Nguyen and Cheung (2016) use specific cultural motives which are enriching knowledge about the destination and learning about the destination's culture and heritage. In sum, cultural motivation represents multi-faceted cultural related factors which motivate tourists to visit a destination.

Intention to Recommend

Tourists' willingness to recommend the destination to others often reflect the degree of destination loyalty (Oppermann, 2000). Generally, destination loyalty has been conceptualized in three ways; behavioural loyalty, attitudinal loyalty and composite loyalty (Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978). In the tourism context, intention to recommend a destination to other potential tourists can measure attitudinal loyalty. Attitudinal loyalty provides a view on why people patronize a product or service and focuses on understanding consumers' preference, liking, and positive attitudes that are reasonably stable over time. It has also been used similarly to psychological commitment (Park, 1996). Commitment involves some amount of affective attachment and is viewed as a process through which individual's interests become attached to carrying out of socially organized patterns of behaviour which express the needs of the individuals' (Buchanan, 1985). Therefore, the intention to recommend is deemed appropriate to measure as the outcome of place attachment.

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Cultural Motivation and Place Attachment

Drawing from previous studies, it is reported that tourists' motivation influence place attachment (Prayag et al., 2017). However, motivation factors can be weakly associated with tourists' place attachment due to using general motivation scales, hence, unique motivations can be more effective in facilitating place attachment (Xu & Zhang, 2016). Attachment theory suggests person-place bonding may develop as a result of needs being fulfilled (Budruk & Stanis, 2013). In the case of cultural heritage sites, if cultural needs of the tourists such as to enrich personal knowledge, to learn about heritage

site, its culture and heritage and to increase knowledge regarding the heritage site are being fulfilled, it is more likely that attachments are developed in the aspect of place dependence, place identity, affective and social bond. Following this notion, this study employs cultural motivation which is cultural related factors that motivate tourists to visit a destination. Hence, it is proposed that:

- H₁: Cultural motivation positively influences place dependence.
- H₂: Cultural motivation positively influences place identity.
- H₃: Cultural motivation positively influences affective attachment.
- H₄: Cultural motivation positively influences social bond.

Place Attachment and Intention to Recommend

Despite several studies show support for the influence of place attachment on behavioural intention, affective attachment and social bond dimensions were absent in those studies (Prayag & Ryan 2012; Prayag et al., 2017). Affective attachment and social bond dimensions are relevant in heritage sites because cultural spaces in the heritage sites provide the opportunity for tourists to build their personal sentiments and for cultural relationships to occur (Ramkissoon, 2015; Low and Altman, 1992). Therefore, this study includes affective attachment and social bond along with place dependence and place identity. Attachment theory proposes that the attachment level may drive individuals to do what they can to maintain the well-being of the attached property. That is, attached tourists may tend to recommend the destination more, with the aim of helping the destination achieves successes it deserves. Hence, it is proposed that:

- H₅: Place dependence positively influences intention to recommend.
- H₆: Place identity positively influences intention to recommend.
- H₇: Affective attachment positively influences intention to recommend.
- H₈: Social bond positively influences intention to recommend.

Figure 1 demonstrates the conceptual framework that covers eight hypotheses discussed in this section.

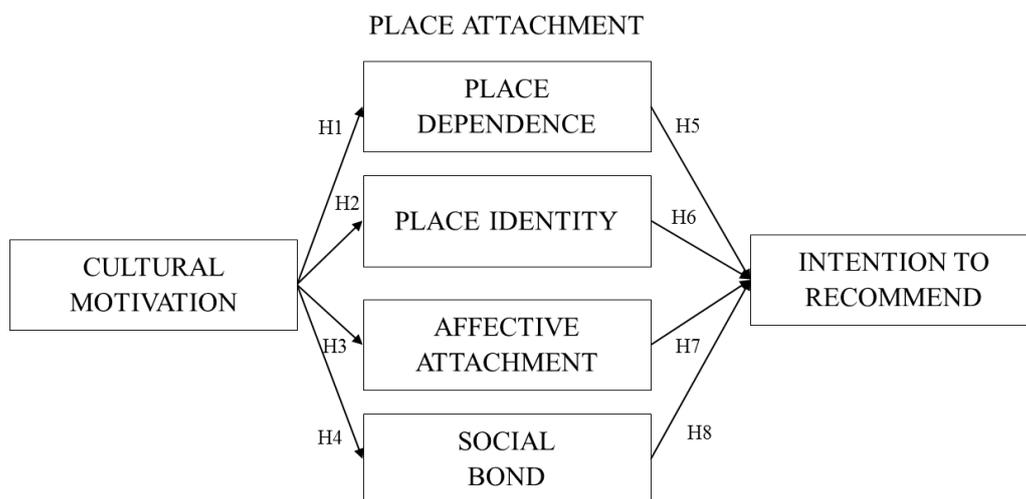


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHOD

Data collection was carried out in 2018 at tourist attractions in the heritage sites of Melaka and George Town, Malaysia. The sample of the study was the local tourists who have visited the heritage

sites. Judgemental sampling was used to select the tourists because tourists sampling frame was not available. In determining minimum sample size, G*Power was used, as such, suggested minimum samples were 138 at each heritage site (Faul et al. 2007). At each heritage site, 198 questionnaires were completed and used for analysis using SmartPLS software (Ringle et al., 2015).

A self-administered questionnaire was used and distributed personally to targeted samples. The questionnaire consisted of measurement items on cultural motivation (4 items), place dependence (3 items), place identity (3 items), affective attachment (3 items), social bond (3 items) and intention to recommend (3 items). Measurement items for cultural motivation were adapted from Nguyen and Cheung (2016) and measured using seven-point Likert scale from 1=Strongly Disagree to 7=Strongly Agree while measurement items for place attachment and intention to recommend were adapted from Jiang et al (2016) and Bonn et al. (2007) correspondingly and measured using five-point Likert scale from 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.

RESULTS

Measurement Model

Indicator loadings, average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) of constructs are shown in Table 1. Each items loadings ranged between 0.799 and 0.922 which met the threshold score of 0.708 (Hair et al., 2017). CR values ranged between 0.866 and 0.938 which were greater than the 0.70 and all AVEs ranged between 0.684 and 0.808 which were greater than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2017). Discriminant validity of the model was assessed by using Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT). Table 2 exhibits that all values fulfilled the criterion of HTMT 0.90 (Gold et al., 2001).

Table 1: Measurement Model

Construct	Indicator	Loading	Composite reliability	AVE
Cultural Motivation (CM)	CM1	0.855	0.938	0.790
	CM2	0.922		
	CM3	0.886		
	CM4	0.891		
Place Dependence (PD)	PD1	0.799	0.866	0.684
	PD2	0.851		
	PD3	0.829		
Place Identity (PI)	PI1	0.878	0.927	0.808
	PI2	0.919		
	PI3	0.900		
Affective Attachment (AA)	AA1	0.826	0.881	0.712
	AA2	0.868		
	AA3	0.837		
Social Bond (SB)	SB1	0.858	0.902	0.755
	SB2	0.902		
	SB3	0.845		
Intention to Recommend (IR)	IR1	0.878	0.922	0.797
	IR2	0.919		
	IR3	0.881		

Table 2: Discriminant Validity

	AA	CM	IR	PD	PI	SB
AA						
CM	0.554					
IR	0.558	0.470				
PD	0.768	0.456	0.609			
PI	0.852	0.503	0.385	0.708		
SB	0.840	0.525	0.342	0.688	0.806	

Structural Model

Table 3 presents the lateral collinearity assessment. All the values of inner Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) for all constructs were less than 3.0 indicating lateral collinearity was not an issue in this study (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2006).

Table 3: Lateral Collinearity Assessment

Construct	Intention to Recommend
Place Dependence	1.735
Place Identity	2.525
Affective Attachment	2.571
Social Bond	2.313

Path-coefficient was assessed to evaluate significance of hypothesized relationships between constructs. Based on Table 4, cultural motivation had positive significant relationship towards place dependence ($\beta=0.382$, $t=8.805$, $p<0.01$), place identity ($\beta=0.452$, $t=11.356$, $p<0.01$), affective attachment ($\beta=0.474$, $t=11.786$, $p<0.01$) and social bond ($\beta=0.461$, $t=10.624$, $p<0.01$). Therefore, H1, H2, H3 and H4 were supported. Place dependence ($\beta=0.383$, $t=4.140$, $p<0.01$) and affective attachment ($\beta=0.360$, $t=4.119$, $p<0.01$) had positive significant relationship towards intention to recommend. However, place identity ($\beta=-0.054$, $t=0.868$, not significant) and social bond ($\beta=-0.123$, $t=1.489$, not significant) did not show any significant relationship on intention to recommend. Therefore, H5 and H7 were supported while H6 and H8 were not supported. R2 values ranged between 0.146 and 0.304 indicating moderate to substantial explanatory power while f2 values ranged between 0.002 and 0.290 indicating trivial to medium effect size (Cohen, 1988). Q2 is larger than 0 indicating that model has predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 4. Structural Model Assessment

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std. Beta	Std. Error	t-value	Decision	R ²	f ²	Q ²
H1	CM->PD	0.382	0.043	8.805**	Supported	0.146	0.170	0.094
H2	CM->PI	0.452	0.040	11.356**	Supported	0.204	0.257	0.155
H3	CM->AA	0.474	0.040	11.786**	Supported	0.225	0.290	0.150
H4	CM->SB	0.461	0.043	10.624**	Supported	0.213	0.270	0.149
H5	PD->IR	0.383	0.093	4.140**	Supported	0.304	0.122	0.225
H6	PI->IR	-0.054	0.063	0.868	Not Supported		0.002	
H7	AA->IR	0.360	0.087	4.119**	Supported		0.073	
H8	SB->IR	-0.123	0.083	1.489	Not Supported		0.009	

Note: **p<0.01, *p < 0.05

DISCUSSIONS

The objective of this study is to examine the antecedent and outcome of place attachment at its dimensional level. The result supported six out of eight proposed hypotheses. According to previous studies, tourists' motivation influences place attachment but these motivation factors can be weakly associated with place attachment because motivation scales used in previous studies were general, hence, unique and more specific motivations are required in facilitating place attachment (Xu & Zhang, 2016; Prayag et al., 2017). Therefore, this study examined cultural motivation, culturally related motives that motivate tourists to visit a destination and found that cultural motivation significantly predicts place attachment. This finding extends the empirical support that specific motives such as cultural motivation can influence place attachment.

Despite several studies such as Prayag & Ryan (2012) and Prayag et al. (2017) show support for the influence of place attachment (place dependence and place identity) on the intention to recommend, this study found otherwise. Based on the findings, only place dependence influences intention to recommend. This is in line with the study of Lee, Kyle, & Scott (2012) that reports only place dependence predicts word-of-mouth recommendations. Individuals who perceive a destination which can facilitate their needs are inclined to spreading positive word-of-mouth to others (Lee et al., 2012). The finding of the insignificant relationship between place identity and intention to recommend suggests that tourists do not have the intention to recommend the heritage sites merely by identifying themselves with heritage sites. This could be due to tourists were not able to identify the congruity between their identity and heritage sites. Perhaps, heritage sites provided insufficient display and offerings of its culture which might be the reason for the insignificant relationship.

The study also found that affective attachment positively influences intention to recommend. This means that tourists are able to build sentiments in themselves about the heritage sites. Therefore, they are more inclined to recommend heritage sites to others. However, social bond was found to have an insignificant relationship with intention to recommend. This finding suggests that tourists do not have the intention to recommend the heritage sites by developing a communal bond with other people. This could be due to tourists have limited opportunities in interacting and communicating with the local residents of heritage sites which leads this relationship to be insignificant.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION

This study contributes to the current body of knowledge in three ways. First, it is known that tourists' attachment is influenced by the desire to satisfy specific needs, however, there are limited studies that assess on the relationship between motivation specifically culturally related motives and place attachment (Prayag et al., 2017; Budruk & Stanis, 2013). Therefore, this study contributes to the current literature by examining the relationship between cultural motivation and place attachment. As anticipated, it is found that cultural motivation influences place dependence, place identity, affective attachment and social bond.

Second, most studies analyse place attachment at its higher-order construct level, as such, having a research gap in testing place attachment at its dimensional level (Ramkissoon, Smith, & Weiler, 2013; Prayag et al., 2017). Therefore, this study fills up this gap because the individual attachment dimension may impact tourists' behavioural outcome differently. Indeed, according to the finding of the study, individual attachment did influence behavioural outcome differently. Third, current literature seems to demonstrate limited studies using intention to recommend as the outcome of place attachment (Yuksel et al., 2010). Therefore, this study contributes to the current literature by examining the relationship between place attachment and intention to recommend. As anticipated, it is found that place dependence and affective attachment influences intention to recommend.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study provides useful information to practitioners in two ways. First, cultural motivation was found to directly drive each dimension of place attachment. Destination managers are encouraged to improve the fulfilment of cultural needs by providing cultural information interactively and

attractively. This can be done by having digital boards around heritage sites and maps with short descriptions on historical spots and tourists attractions that tourists should not miss during their visit. Besides that, guided walkabout around heritage sites could be another effective way to fulfil cultural knowledge needs of culturally motivated tourists, where cultural facts and stories are explained to the tourists while “walking” through the sites where the stories took place and making the experience more tangible and real. Furthermore, destination managers can also uplift the heritage and architectural display by inserting technological elements such as sound systems and lighting. All these are suggested because culturally motivated tourists are generally driven by knowledge seeking.

Second, place dependence and affective attachment were found to influence intention to recommend. Therefore, destination managers are encouraged to put their effort into enhancing place dependence and affective attachment. Place dependence refers to how well a heritage site facilitates tourism activities, hence, it can be improved by enhancing touristic qualities that facilitate the enjoyment of visiting heritage sites such as improving information availability in regards to tourists’ attractions such as product offerings, operating hours and fees. Affective attachment refers to tourists building their personal sentiments about heritage sites, hence, it can be heightened by training the local residents to be skilful in communicating with tourists so that useful and unique facts about heritage sites can be delivered to tourists effectively which then, may help tourists to build positive sentiments about heritage sites. Therefore, in short, to ensure that tourists recommend the destination, it is vital for destination managers to go beyond in ensuring that tourists have the sense of the place and feel attach towards the destination.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Even though this study is able to close the research gaps, several limitations are discovered. First, the data of this study were collected from the local tourists of the heritage sites. Future studies can attempt to test the conceptual framework in the context of foreign tourists. Second, this study measured place attachment as a post-visit construct but an individual might have developed an attachment to a place before their travelling period (Kyle, Mowen, & Tarrant, 2004). Therefore, by using a longitudinal research design, future studies can attempt to capture pre and post-visit levels of place attachment (Hosany et al., 2016). Third, this study has looked into behavioural intention like intention to recommend, however, it does not address behaviour as one of its constructs in the research framework. The reason was the instrument to measure visitation is not sufficient by looking only on the intention to recommend rather than the tourists’ actual behaviour. Therefore, future studies can attempt to incorporate tourists’ actual behaviour of visitation in the conceptual framework.

CONCLUSION

All in all, this study has managed to highlight the importance of acknowledging cultural motivation being one of the main reasons to visit cultural heritage sites. If destination fulfils cultural needs well, tourists will become more attached in all four attachment dimensions (place dependence, place identity, affective attachment and social bond). Finally, attached tourists would put in more effort in recommending the destination to family and friends, consistent with the notion suggested by the Attachment theory. Basing on the significant results, several recommendations were provided to destination managers of heritage sites.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper was presented at the International Symposium on Applied Structural Equation Modeling and Methodological Matters (SASEM) 2019 which was held at Novotel Melaka on 21-24 August 2019. This study has been funded through UPM Putra Grant - Putra Graduate Initiative (IPS) Project Number 9536000 granted by Universiti Putra Malaysia.

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