

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Sense of place relationship with tourist satisfaction and intentional revisit: Evidence from Egypt

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Abstract

Sense of place is a multidimensional concept. It implies an emotional relationship between an individual and a setting. The current study aims to explore the predictors of place attachment, and measure the effect of place attachment and its predictors on tourist satisfaction, and how this satisfaction could affect tourist future revisits. Using structural equation modelling, this study provides evidence from two distinct places in Egypt: Bahariya Oasis/the White Desert and Fayoum. A questionnaire was used to collect data from repeat tourists to both places. The findings revealed that repeat tourists are place attached. This attachment is positively influencing tourist satisfaction and their intentional repeat visit. The findings of the study could be used to develop marketing strategies of destinations with sense of place dimensions. Tour operators and travel agents are requested to include sense of place dimensions in their tour packages. National authorities are invited to focus on sense of place dimensions in their destinations.

KEYWORDS

Bahariya Oasis/the White Desert, Egypt, Fayoum, place attachment, sense of place, structural equation modelling, tourist satisfaction

1 | INTRODUCTION

“Place” has become a major topic of research in social science since 1970. Sense of place implies the relationship between individuals and a spatial setting. Sense of place has been studied in different settings including behaviour studies especially in geography and environmental studies (Barker, 1968). In geography, “topophilia” refers to an individual’s emotional and effective bond towards a special setting that varies from light to deeply rooted attachment (Tuan, 1974). In environmental studies, sense of place is the individual perception of the environment and the conscious feelings about this environment (Hummon, 1992). Stedman (2003) considered that sense of place is a human attitude towards a particular place. Generally, sense of place refers to an emotional tie between people and a place (Mahon, 2007), through its distinctive physical attributes (landscape, architectural building, and so forth) and personal attachment (emotions and feelings) (Williams & Allen, 2015). Thus, this term involves a set of meanings such as knowledge, attachment, commitment, and satisfaction that an individual associates with a particular place (Wang & Chen, 2015).

Various studies have emphasized the tie between people and place in tourist and recreational contexts with the term “sense of

place” or its synonym “place attachment.” These studies could be divided into three axes. The first dealt with sense of place as an outcome revealed from tourist operations (i.e., place features, activities, facilities, and involvement; i.e., Chen, King, & Fank, 2013; Fan & Qiu, 2014; Gross & Brown, 2008; Kyle, Graefe, Manning, & Bacon, 2003; Kyle, Graefe, Manning, & Bacon, 2004; Ramkissoon & Mavondo, 2015). The second investigated sense of place as a predictor to loyalty and intentional revisit (i.e., Gross & Brown, 2006; Hwang, Lee, & Chen, 2005; Ram, Björk, & Weidenfeld, 2016; Yuksel, Yuksel, & Bilim, 2010). The third states that sense of place is a mediator that affects some aspects of tourism (i.e., Cheng & Wu, 2015; Kil, Holland, Stein, & Ko, 2012; Lee, Kyle, & Scott, 2012; Lee & Shen, 2013; Loureiro, 2014; Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Tsai, 2012).

Considering these three axes, it is found that predictors of place attachment are not well studied. Instead of considering expressive attachments a part of place attachment, the current study has tested it as a predictor to place attachment. In addition, this study has found that “recreational activities,” which are an important aspect of place attachment, are not well explained as a predictor to place attachment. Furthermore, the relationships between the predictors of place attachment (expressive attachment and recreational activities) and tourist