A Study on the Relationship between Sense of Place, Satisfaction and Recommendation Intention

Hong HUI¹,a,* and Yan-Qu ZHENG¹,b

¹Chongqing University of Technology, Chongqing, China

*a hhzrj@cqut.edu.cn, b 631714922@qq.com

*Corresponding author

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Abstract. Tourists may develop a sense of place to a destination thus satisfaction seems no more important than it used to think, which could influence tourists' further attitude and behavior and could be used to enhance the marketing strategies as well as tourism planning. This study uses empirical analysis to build a model of the influence mechanism between tourists’ sense of place, satisfaction, and recommendation and uses 300 questionnaires in Hongya Cave, a tourist sight-seeing destination in Chongqing, as research objects to examine whether and how tourists’ sense of place affects the recommendation. The results show that satisfaction is not the most important factor affecting the recommend intention. The dimensions of sense of place, like cultural atmosphere, local food and business have an impact on the recommendation through satisfaction mediation, while place attachment directly affects recommendation intention.

Introduction

Word-of-mouth recommendations abroad began in the 1970s. [1] The domestic research on recommendation willingness started late, and most domestic scholars summarized the recommendation willingness into loyalty or post- behavior, only limited research was done separately.

The theory of a sense of place originates from early research on environmental psychology and perception. Regarding the definition of the sense of place, Tuan proposed in 1977, which refers to the identity of the place itself and people's dependence on the place. [2] In recent years, scholars in China have also deepened the research on the sense of place, including the introduction of sense of place concept, the framework of ODTG research on the sense of place, and cognitive measures of sense of place.

Satisfaction refers to a psychological state formed by tourists’ comparison of perceived performance and expected effects of destination. [3] Generally, satisfaction is considered to be a necessary prerequisite for loyalty, that is, the higher the satisfaction, the higher the revisit rate and the recommend intention. However, some scholars have pointed out that the impact of satisfaction on revisit behavior is not significant. [4]

Literature Review and Research Hypothesis

Sense of Place and Recommendation Intention

The sense of place, which is an important part of the research on the relationship between people and the place, originated in the 1950s. People perceive the special meaning given by the place and then produce certain decisions and behaviors. The sense of place is a complex multi-dimensional structure. [5] The scale of place sense is highly differentiated. Different subjects, destination identity will cause different dimensions of the sense of place.

In tourism study, tourist loyalty is generally measured from the willingness of tourists to revisit and the willingness to recommend. In studying the relationship between place attachment and loyalty, Yu Yifeng proved that place attachment has a significant positive impact on loyalty (willingness to revisit and recommendation). [6] Studies such as Liu Chunyan have proved that
tourists' sense of place positively affects tourist loyalty. Based on this, this study makes the following assumptions:

H1: Tourists' sense of place has a significant positive impact on the willingness to recommend.

Satisfaction and Recommendation Intention

Satisfaction is considered to be an important pre-determining factor for improving corporate competitiveness and maintaining customer loyalty. However, Oliver proposed that satisfaction does not necessarily bring loyalty. Chinese scholar Fan Xiucheng also proposed that the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty is more complicated by integrating 100 domestic and foreign results on customer satisfaction and loyalty. This article argues that satisfaction does indeed positively affect loyalty, but the impact may be far less than expected by people. Therefore, this article proposes the following research hypotheses:

H2: Tourist satisfaction has a significant positive effect on the reason for the recommendation.

Sense of Place and Satisfaction

The sense of place is based on the subjectivity of human's local experience and also based on the emotional attachment and identification of specific places. Satisfaction refers to a psychological state formed by tourists' perception of actual performance and expected effects of destination products and services. Scholar Jiang Changchun found in the study that tourists’ sense of place has a significant positive impact on tourist satisfaction. Therefore, this article proposes the following assumptions:

H3: Tourists' sense of place has a significant positive impact on tourist satisfaction.

Research Design

Research Objects and Research Methods

This study takes Chongqing Hongya Cave as an example. Hongya Cave is a commercial district that reflects the traditional architecture of Ba culture and shows the characteristics of folk customs. Hongya Cave was completed in 2006 but has become popular in the past few years.

This article uses quantitative research. The sense of place scale was redesigned based on the previous research, and revised based on the comments of tourists on Sina Weibo. The four dimensions of the sense of place includes resource value, cultural atmosphere, local food and business, and place attachment, measured with 15 items. Tourist satisfaction uses overall satisfaction to measure the overall feelings of tourists. The willingness to recommend was measured using three scales from the previous study. The questionnaire uses a 5-point Likert scale to measure the different attitudes of the respondents. One point indicates "strong opposition", three points indicate "neutral attitude", and five points indicate "complete agreement".

Data Analysis

A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed during the survey, and 300 were recovered. Incomplete and invalid questionnaires were removed. A total of 236 valid questionnaires were obtained with an effective recovery rate of 78.7%. All analyses were performed using SPSS22.0 and AMOS22.0 software.

The demographic characteristics of this survey sample are: male tourists accounted for 50.8% of the survey population, female tourists accounted for 49.2%. The respondents are mainly middle-aged and young people, and their income is mainly low- and middle-income. In terms of education level, the proportion of college degrees or above is large, and career distribution is even.
Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Use AMOS22.0 for confirmatory factor analysis, including checking the goodness and validity of the measurement model. According to the model's fitting index, the values of $\chi^2$/DF are 2.02, which is less than the standard of 5. The value of RMSEA is 0.065, which is less than 0.08. The three indicators of NFI, CFI, and IFI are all greater than 0.9. Although PNFI and PCFI are not greater than 0.5, they are also close to 0.5, indicating that the model fits well. The structural model fitting index is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Goodness of Fit Indices of Structural Model.

| Absolute Fit Index | Relative Fit Index | Reduced Fit Index |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| X$^2$/DF           | REMSEA             | NFI               | CFI | IFI | RFI | PNFI | PCFI |
| <5                 | <0.08              | >0.90             | >0.90 | >0.90 | >0.90 | >0.5 | >0.5 |
| 2.020              | 0.065              | 0.949             | 0.973 | 0.974 | 0.898 | 0.475 | 0.486 |

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

Table 2 lists the mean and correlation coefficients of all variables. The squared values of the correlation coefficients of most latent variables are smaller than the average extraction variance, which proves that the latent variables have sufficient discrimination validity. It can also be seen from Table 2 that there are significant positive correlations between resource value, cultural atmosphere, local food and business, place attachment and recommendation intention, with correlation coefficients of 0.193 (p < 0.01), 0.455 (p < 0.001), 0.486 (p < 0.001), 0.497 (p < 0.001). At the same time, there was also a significant positive correlation between satisfaction and recommendation willingness (r = 0.301, p < 0.001).

Table 2. Square Root of AVE and Correlation Coefficient.

| Latent Variable | Mean  | 1     | 2     | 3     | 4     | 5     | 6     |
|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Resource Value  | 4.52  | 0.720 |       |       |       |       |       |
| Cultural        | 3.78  | 0.342*** | 0.699 |       |       |       |       |
| Atmosphere      | 3.815 | 0.344*** | 0.601*** | 0.720 |       |       |       |
| Local Food and  | 3.64  | 0.651*** | 0.845*** | 0.856*** | 0.689 |       |       |
| Business        | 4.05  | 0.330*** | 0.343*** | 0.340*** | 0.424*** | 0.728 |       |
| Place Attachment| 4.32  | 0.193*** | 0.455*** | 0.486*** | 0.497*** | 0.301*** | 0.787 |

Note: *** indicates a significant level of 0.001, ** indicates a significant level of 0.01; the same applies below.

Hypothetical Test

To examine the role of latent variable dimensions, scholars usually replace the original variables in theoretical models with subdivision dimensions. Therefore, this study replaces the sense of place with resource value, cultural atmosphere, local food and business, and place attachment, and proposes corresponding sub-hypotheses. The specific differences are: H1a-H1d: The resources value, cultural atmosphere, local food, and business, and place attachment have a significant positive impact on the willingness to recommend; H3a-H3d: The resources value, cultural atmosphere, local food, and business, and place attachment have respective significant positive impact on satisfaction. Hypothesis 2 is unchanged.
Main Effect Test

To verify the positive influence of the sense of place on the recommendation intention, the recommendation will be set as the dependent variable. The four dimensions of sense of place: resource value, cultural atmosphere, local food, and business and place attachment as independent variables. In Table 3, it can be known from Model 1 that the resource value effectively explains 30% of the variation in recommendation intention, and the resource value has a significant positive impact on the recommendation intention (β = 0.185, p <0.01), assuming H1a holds. The cultural atmosphere (β = 0.450, p <0.001), local food and business (β = 0.462, p <0.001), and place attachment (β = 0.483, p <0.001) all have significant positive effects on the willingness to recommend, so we assume H1 established. Similarly, in model 5, satisfaction (β = 0.319, p <0.001) has a significant positive effect on the willingness to recommend. Hypothesis 2 holds.

| Variable   | Mode 1    | Mode 2    | Mode 3    | Mode 4    | Mode 5    |
|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| A1         | 0.185**   |           |           |           |           |
| A2         |           | 0.450***  |           |           |           |
| A3         |           |           | 0.462***  |           |           |
| A4         |           |           |           | 0.483***  |           |
| Satisfaction |          |           |           |           | 0.319***  |
| R²         | 0.34      | 0.203     | 0.213     | 0.233     | 0.102     |
| Adjusted R² | 0.30      | 0.199     | 0.210     | 0.230     | 0.098     |
| F          | 8.321**   | 59.520*** | 63.505*** | 71.261*** | 26.455*** |

Then, this study was tested using hierarchical regression. As can be seen from Table 4, the value of resources (β = 0.303, p <0.001), cultural atmosphere (β = 0.357, p <0.001), local food and business (β = 0.370, p <0.001), place attachment (β = 0.408, p <0.001) have a significant positive impact on satisfaction. It is assumed that H3 holds.

| Variable   | Mode 1    | Mode 2    | Mode 3    | Mode 4    |
|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| A1         | 0.303**   |           |           |           |
| A2         |           | 0.357***  |           |           |
| A3         |           |           | 0.370***  |           |
| A4         |           |           |           | 0.408***  |
| R²         | 0.092     | 0.128     | 0.137     | 0.166     |
| Adjusted R² | 0.088     | 0.124     | 0.133     | 0.163     |
| F          | 23.659**  | 34.247*** | 37.061*** | 46.623*** |

Conclusion and Discussion

This study uses empirical analysis to build a model of the impact mechanism between tourists' sense of place, satisfaction, and recommendation intention and uses 300 tourists as the research object to investigate whether and how tourists' sense of place will influence recommendation and got the following conclusions.

First, although many studies have confirmed that tourist satisfaction affects the formation of recommendation intention, this study proves that satisfaction is not the most important factor affecting recommendation, and the sense of place as a pre-variant is more important for the formation of recommendation. That is to say, the higher the level of sense of place for tourists, the higher their satisfaction and willingness to recommend.

Second, the willingness to recommend requires a sense of place as support. In the four dimensions that form a sense of place, the cultural atmosphere, local food and business, and place...
attachment have a significant impact on the willingness to recommend. In contrast, the resource value is a less important element.

The phenomenon that many tourists continue to recommend scenic spots without high satisfaction can be explained in this study. So tourism destinations need to pay more attention to the construction of a sense of place so that can improve destination marketing.

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