

Decoding Host-Tourist Interaction and Tourists' Intention to Revisit: A Mediation Model of Place Attachment

Abstract

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The main aim of the investigation is to explore how the interaction between hosts and tourists influences tourists' intention to revisit a particular destination. Furthermore, the study seeks to examine the role of place attachment in mediating the relationship between host-tourist interactions and revisiting intention. In this regard, a questionnaire was developed based on existing literature and subjected to a pilot study to ensure its validity and reliability. The research employed a descriptive research design and adopted a positivist approach. A total of 360 valid questionnaires were analysed for the study, which were collected from tourists visiting Kashmir Valley using convenience sampling. The collected data were processed using SPSS and Smart-PLS software. The results of the analysis indicated a significant and positive correlation between host-tourist interaction and tourists' intention to revisit the destination. Additionally, the findings demonstrated that place attachment played a mediating role in the connection between host-tourist interaction and revisit intention. These findings emphasize the importance of promoting interactions between hosts and tourists, as they have the potential to positively influence tourists' likelihood of revisiting the destination. By fostering meaningful connections and attachment to the place, the destination can enhance the overall experience for tourists, increasing the probability of their return visits.

Keywords: Host-tourist interaction, functional, expressive, hedonic, revisit intention, place attachment

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Introduction

The tourist serves as the central entity of the tourism industry and plays a pivotal role in driving its growth and shaping its dynamics. With a thirst for exploration, the tourist embodies the essence of wanderlust and seeks out new experiences, cultural encounters, and breath-taking destinations (Cicero, 2020; Liu et al., 2019; Robinson & Schänzel, 2019; Zhang et al., 2018). As the primary consumer of tourism products and services, the tourist's preferences, needs, and behaviours influence the entire industry (Femenia-Serra et al., 2019). Their decisions and choices determine the success or failure of destinations, hotels, attractions, and tour operators. Tourists contribute to the local economies of host destinations (Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2020), stimulates job creation (Koh, 2020), infrastructure development (Kanwal et al., 2020), and investment opportunities (Arshad et al., 2018). The influx of tourists to the country leads to a proportional increase in the country's revenue, owing to the high volume of visitors (Huseynl, 2022). Furthermore, their interactions with local communities foster cultural exchange and understanding (Kutor et al., 2021; Zuniga, 2019), and prompt a sense of global citizenship (Dearborn, 2018). Thus, the tourist stands at the core of the tourism industry, acting as a catalyst for economic growth, cultural exchange, and mutual understanding between diverse cultures and people. A vast body of empirical literature exists with tourists as the central focus. The present investigation places the interaction between the host and the tourist as the primary focus. It is a proven fact that maintaining customer relationships is essential for enhancing business (Gil-Gomez et al., 2020). One of the key factors that effectively emphasize the maintenance of the customer relationship is excellent communication (Juanamasta et al., 2019). The application of this factor within the tourism industry illustrates the significance of the interaction between host and tourist. Diverse scholars have employed varying metrics to assess the interaction between host and tourist. The impact of functional and hedonic factors has been noted in various studies (Kunchambo & Little, 2022; Tabaeian et al., 2022; Wei et al., 2020). Currently, there is a lack of empirical research on the utilisation of "Expressive interactions" as a means of assessing the interaction between host and tourist and the present study intends to address this gap.

The phenomenon of expressive interaction is rooted in the desire of customers to engage in self-expression, which serves to enhance their sense of self-identity and establish social significance, such as status, image, and prestige (Smith & Colgate, 2007). This type of interaction has the potential to not only enhance customers' sensory experiences but also generate cognitive processes which ultimately will encourage thinking and reflect their self-concept and social cognition (Lin et al., 2020). Research findings indicate that consumers have a high tendency to favour products that are highly visible to obtain symbolic or expressive value (Jiang et al., 2021). The literature review illustrates the importance of this specific factor (symbolic or expressive) but research conducted concerning tourism has not adequately addressed it. In addition, it is important to note that a strong and meaningful interaction between hosts and tourists has the potential to establish an emotional bond with the destination, which can significantly influence tourists' intention to revisit. Therefore, the study also aims to investigate whether place attachment plays a mediating role in the connection between host-tourist interaction and tourists' intention to revisit. By examining the mediating effect of place attachment, the study seeks to understand the underlying mechanism through which host-tourist interactions impact tourists' intention to revisit. It recognises that the 'emotional connection' and 'sense of



attachment to the place' fostered through positive interactions with hosts and ultimately can contribute towards shaping tourists' intentional behaviour to return to the destination.

Review of literature

Host-tourist interaction

Interaction refers to the dynamic relationship and engagement between tourists and the hosts within the local community. It encompasses the various forms of communication, exchange, and activities that occur between tourists and the residents of the destination. It is the process in which people swap their information, emotions, and experiences (Chen et al., 2020; Gremler & Gwinner, 2000) and acts as a gateway between tourists and service providers (Lehtinen & Lehtinen, 1982). The interactions between tourists and locals are more likely to be enabled due to cultural variations (Crompton, 1979; Bartis & Madlwabanga, 2020). According to Bitner (1992), the social factor is a crucial element in the interaction between service providers and service recipients. It is essential to consider the social dynamics and context in which customer service takes place to understand its impact fully. The three facets of interaction between host and guest are a) Hedonic, b) Functional, and c) Expressive or symbolic. Hedonic is related to providing an emotional connection to a customer, functional is related to sharing information regarding a service or product (Kaminakis et al., 2019; Kobia & Liu, 2017; Voss et al., 2003) and expressive or symbolic is related to the exchange of information that conveys and/or reflects values and beliefs of the customer (Yang & Mattila, 2016). According to Kastenholz et al., 2013; Reisinger & Turner, 2002, host and tourist interaction is possible when a) tourists buy things, b) tourists and hosts use the same location, amenity, or attraction, and c) both the parties share their perspectives. Interaction between guests and hosts affects tourists' and locals' views and satisfaction levels (Carneiro & Eusébio, 2015).

Individual theory of economics holds that people may rationally evaluate and seek out the most possible benefit from a deal or exchange when there is unrestricted competition and an open market, which paved the way for Social Exchange Theory (Ritzer, 1983). The historical antecedents of Social Exchange Theory (SET) may be found at least as early as the 1920s (Mauss 2002; Malinowski, 1922) addressing social behaviour. Social behaviour is thus the outcome of an exchange process (Priporas et al., 2017) and can be credited with founding the exchange behaviour school of SET (Homans, 1958). It (the exchange behaviour school) focuses on reward theories to explain how a person's benefits and values affect his behaviour (Chang, 2021). While there are multiple perspectives on social exchange, scholars generally concur that social exchange involves a series of interactions that give rise to mutual obligations and responsibilities (Emerson, 1976). According to Blau (1964), it is a process that is crucial to social existence and underlies both group and individual relationships. A core principle of this theory posits that interpersonal connections evolve gradually leading to trustworthy, committed, and mutually beneficial commitments (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This facilitates the scholars to elucidate the development of connections and rationales for participating in interactions within a network of agents (Bellotti et al., 2015). It has been also incorporated into the tourism sector to study the attitudes of actors of tourism towards its development (Ribeiro et al., 2017; Park et al., 2015; Andereck et al., 2005; Rutherford, 2004; Ko & Stewart, 2002; Gursoy & Jurowski et al., 1997; Perdue et al., 1990; Napier & Bryant, 1980). The pioneering work is done by Ap where SET in tourism describes how local attitudes about tourism are formed based on assessments of the perceived economic benefits and exchange costs of tourism i.e., sharing resources with tourists and making up for the discomforts that come with tourism (Ap, 1992).

Social Penetration Theory (SPT), established by Altman & Taylor in 1973, further elaborates that the exchange of information contributes to the formation and dissolution of interpersonal relationships (Carpenter & Greene, 2015). This exchange of information facilitates the process of transforming a mere familiarisation into a relationship with feelings (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Self-disclosure which is the intentional act of revealing personal information about oneself is the sole means of purposefully achieving social penetration (Derlega et al., 1993). It takes place in a variety of settings, like friendships, and social groupings including religious groups and professional interactions (Carpenter & Greene, 2015). Depth and Breadth are the two aspects that shape the interaction among the groups in terms of the degree of closeness (Altman, 1981). Such interactions are reciprocity oriented where the reciprocity norm is a theoretical concept that suggests that individuals are inclined to maintain a sense of balance and fairness in their social interactions (Carpenter & Greene, 2015). This norm dictates that when one person discloses personal information to another, the recipient is expected to reciprocate by revealing something of similar intimacy and significance. This practice is believed to promote a sense of equality and mutual trust in social relationships. To persuade the other individual to reveal themselves or reciprocate, someone may purposefully initiate the interaction (Carpenter & Greene, 2015; Berkowitz, 1972; Lévi-Strauss, 1996).

There has been a significant amount of scholarly discourse surrounding the reasons why a host may choose to assist a tourist. Certain theoretical perspectives posit that this behaviour is motivated by a sense of reciprocity, while others contend that it is driven by altruistic tendencies. The word "altruism" did not exist until 1851. Auguste Comte, the French philosopher introduced the term by contrasting it with egoism (Wilson, 2015). The principle of altruism dictates that one should always try to help others, even if it means giving up something that is absolutely required (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). It is commonly defined as conduct that involves prioritising the interests of others over one's own. Although perspectives differ on who benefits from altruism and how the cost of altruism is calculated (Kerr et al., 2004). The study of altruism is crucial on three levels a) it relates to a fundamental personality trait, b) to the basic objective of socialisation, and c) to theories about human nature (Krebs, 1970). Piliavin & Charng (1990) contend that certain deemed acceptable behaviours, such as charitable work, helping others, donating blood, and various acts of generosity, are fundamentally grounded in altruistic motives. Faulkner & Tideswell, (1997), Fennell, (2006); Uriely et al. (2002) extended this concept to the tourism sector by examining the relationship between hosts and tourists. Guests who engage in greater levels of interaction with their hosts attribute greater significance to social benefits,



whereas guests who reserve an entire space intending to avoid interaction prioritise other factors. Therefore the level of guest satisfaction is influenced by how they engage with one another during the sharing of accommodations (Lee, 2022). Lin & Fu, (2021) confounds that constructive interaction between tourists and hosts can result in a deeper understanding of the indigenous culture, tradition, norms and rituals. This phenomenon can lead to a heightened sense of authenticity for the tourist, as they are provided with the opportunity to fully engage with and merge into the surrounding community. The phenomenon of tourism entails the exchange and engagement between the communities of travellers and the destinations they visit. Several theoretical frameworks were proposed to comprehend the philosophical underpinnings of interaction. The discussion encompassed the study of SET, SPT, and altruism as means of comprehending the interaction between the host and tourist, as well as the profound impact and underlying reasoning behind it. Since the inception of modern-day tourism, scholars have displayed a keen interest in comprehending this correlation and its ramifications.

Tourist revisit intention

An intention to plan and carry out a specific behaviour might be referred to as a behavioural intention (Oliver, 1997; Ryan & Glendon, 1998). The revisit intention is derived from behavioural intentions (Pratminingsih et al., 2014). Revisit Intention is defined as the possibility that a tourist will repeat his visit (Baker & Crompton, 2000). According to Ajzen (2002), individuals are more inclined to engage in a specific behaviour when they possess a stronger intention to do so. In the travel and leisure industries, this can be done by repurchasing a travel or leisure service or by returning to a location or tourist site (Pratminingsih et al., 2014). It is a measure of consumer loyalty in the tourism industry (Chi & Qu, 2008; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Increasing people's intent to return is a crucial objective for the hospitality sector (Tanford et al., 2012). Numerous studies have examined the primary factors that influence revisit intentions, including cultural factors (Chen & Gursoy, 2001), satisfaction (Han & Ryu, 2009), country and destination image (Loi et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2018), experience (Lin et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2018), as well as beliefs, nostalgic feelings, and attitudes (Akgün et al., 2020; Choe & Kim, 2018; Stylos et al., 2016). Understanding visitors' intention to return is crucial for destination managers as it can enhance income and reduce expenses (Park & Yoon, 2009). Based on this, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1: Host-tourist interaction influences the revisit intention.
- H1a: Hedonic interaction influences the revisit intention.
- H1b: Functional interaction influences the revisit intention.
- H1c: Expressive interaction influences the revisit intention.

Place attachment

Environmental psychologists have employed the connection between individuals and their physical surroundings to define place attachment (Lee, 2009). Place attachment encompasses various interconnected concepts related to the relationship between humans and their environment, such as place identification, sense of place, environmental embeddedness, and community feeling (Low & Altman, 1992). It encompasses any emotional bond or attachment that individuals feel towards a specific location or setting (Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2023). Human interactions have a substantial influence on the way individuals perceive and encounter a specific travel destination, particularly in the context of tourism (Trauer & Ryan, 2005). When tourists and visitors engage meaningfully in social interactions and activities within the location, place attachment is more likely to occur (Milligan, 1998). A tourist's emotional connection to a location can range in intensity from immediate sensory attachment to lifelong, deeply ingrained devotion (Altman & Low, 1992). Place attachment has been the subject of extensive research across various disciplines to better understand the connections between tourists and destinations, as well as to effectively manage and market tourist attractions (Dwyer et al., 2019). Scholars have proposed that place attachment is a crucial construct for explaining both tourist and resident behavioural intentions given the complexity and challenges associated with creating and managing pleasant experiences and relationships in the tourism industry (Chen & Dwyer, 2018; Chen et al., 2014, 2015, 2018; Hosany et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2012; Tsai, 2012). The phenomenon of place attachment has a significant impact on the likelihood of tourists revisiting a particular destination (Brown et al., 2016). Tourists who form a deep emotional connection with a particular location are inclined to exhibit a greater inclination to revisit (Swanson, 2017) and establish a sustained rapport with a particular destination (Liu et al., 2020). The development of place attachment is associated with favourable attitudes (Han et al., 2019), emotional connections (Dwyer et al., 2019), and a feeling of fidelity (Liu et al., 2020) towards a particular location resulting in an increased inclination to revisit the particular location. Several research studies have provided evidence supporting the mediating role of place attachment in their respective investigations (Cho, 2021; Li et al., 2021; Nasir et al., 2020; Hosany et al., 2017; Bonaiuto et al., 2016; Wong & Lai, 2015; George & George, 2004).

- H2: Place attachment serves as a mediator between the relationship of host-tourist interaction and the intention to revisit a destination.

Research methodology

A quantitative research approach was adopted to achieve the objective of the present research. To evaluate the influence of host-tourist interaction on tourists' intention to revisit a destination, both primary and secondary data were collected and utilized. The secondary data was gathered from a diverse range of international and national journals, which provided valuable insights and previous findings related to the topic. On the other hand, primary data was collected through self-administered

questionnaires, which were distributed to tourists visiting the Kashmir Valley. These questionnaires served as a source to directly gather information and opinions from the tourists themselves, allowing for a first hand assessment of their experiences and perceptions regarding their interactions with the hosts and their intention to revisit. This study aimed to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between host-tourist interaction and tourists' intention to revisit the Kashmir valley by employing a combination of secondary and primary data.

Research framework

To accomplish these objectives, an extensive review of relevant literature on host-tourist interaction, place attachment, and revisit intention was conducted. The framework provides a visual representation of the relationships between the variables of interest and will serve as a guide for organising and understanding the data collected during the study. By examining the existing literature and employing a conceptual framework (Figure 1), the study aims to contribute to the understanding of how host-tourist interactions and place attachment influence tourists' intention to revisit a destination.

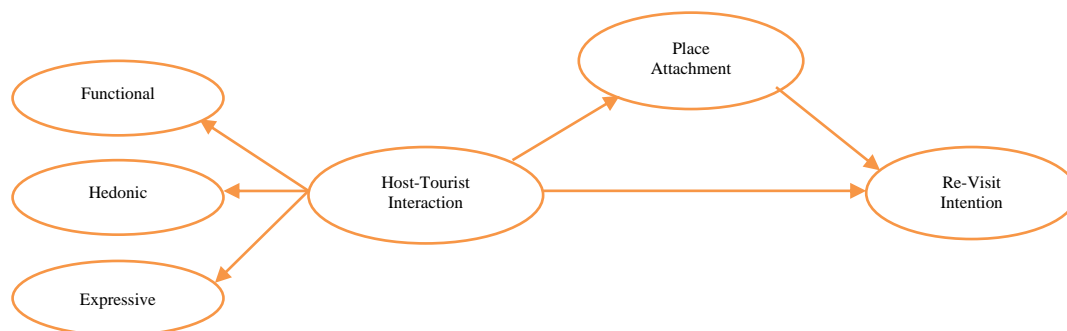


Figure 1: Research framework

Research instrument and pilot study

The questionnaire used in the study consisted of two sections. The first section aimed to capture the demographic profile of the participants that included their age, gender, marital status, education level, occupation, number of visits to the destination, and purpose of their visit. The second part of the questionnaire was designed to assess the perceptions of tourists regarding three key variables: Host-Tourist Interaction, Place Attachment, and their Intention to Revisit the destination. The respondents were presented with 23 statements related to these variables and were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement on a 5-point Likert scale. The scale ranged from "1" representing "totally disagree" to "5" representing "totally agree". This section of the questionnaire aimed to capture the participants' subjective evaluations and opinions regarding their experiences with host-tourist interactions, the level of their attachment to the destination, and their intention to revisit in the future. The scale consists of three variables viz. host-tourist interaction, place attachment and revisit intention. The variable host-tourist interaction has 03 first-order reflective constructs (Functional, Hedonic and Expressive). This variable has 13 statements taken from the studies of Zhang et al., (2017), Voss et al., (2003) and Lin et al., (2020). The variable Place Attachment has 05 statements taken from the study of Kyle et al. (2004) and revisit intention has 04 items taken from the study of Quintal & Polczynski (2010) and Stylos et al. (2016).

A series of steps were taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire used in the study. Firstly, a pre-test was conducted involving a panel of individuals with expertise in the field. This panel consisted of five research scholars, three faculty members, and four industry specialists. The purpose of the pre-test was to assess the clarity, comprehensibility, and appropriateness of the questionnaire items. Feedback and suggestions from the panel were collected and incorporated to improve the questionnaire's quality and relevance. The questionnaire was administered to a pilot study among 25 participants after the necessary revisions were made based on the pre-test feedback. The pilot study aimed to evaluate the reliability of the instrument. Additionally, the reliability of each construct was assessed using statistical analysis, specifically by calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The recommended threshold for reliability is typically 0.70 or higher, as suggested by Nunnally (1978).

Study settings and sampling design

The study was conducted in the scenic valley of Kashmir surrounded by the mighty Himalayan ranges with lofty snow-covered peaks at an altitude of 5200 feet above sea level. The data for this study were obtained from tourists who had visited Kashmir Valley during the year 2022. To collect the necessary data for the study, a convenience sampling method was employed. In this case, 737 questionnaires were distributed among the respondents using convenience sampling. After the questionnaires were distributed, they were collected back from the respondents. However, not all of the returned questionnaires were considered valid for further analysis. Out of the total number of questionnaires collected, only 360 were deemed valid and met the necessary criteria for inclusion in the analysis. These 360 valid questionnaires were selected for further analysis as they provided complete and reliable data. It is important to note that the validity and reliability of the data depend on factors such as respondents' accuracy and honesty in providing responses, as well as the clarity and effectiveness of the questionnaire itself.



Data analysis and results

Data screening is an essential step before proceeding to further multivariate analysis. The proper screening of data is done to find out whether there is any missing value, unengaged response, or an outlier (Gaskin, 2017). Therefore, using the Statistical Package SPSS 20.00, the whole data was screened using a frequency test, with results demonstrating no occurrence of outliers.

Demographic characteristics

This descriptive analysis provides an overview of the respondent's demographic profile, shedding light on important characteristics such as gender, age, marital status, education, occupation, and purpose of visit. These insights can be valuable for understanding the composition and preferences of the surveyed population. Table 1 indicates that out of the total respondents, 61.4% (221) are male, while 38.6% (139) are female. The respondents were predominantly male, accounting for 61.4% of the sample, while females made up 38.6%. The respondents in the study were distributed across various age groups. The highest representation was found in the age category of 29-39 years, accounting for 40.3% of the total respondents. The next largest group was the age category of 18-28 years, making up 31.9% of the respondents. Those aged 40-50 years represented 24.2% of the participants. Finally, the smallest group consisted of respondents aged 51-61 years, comprising only 3.6% of the total respondents. A majority of the respondents reported being married (69.4%), while the remaining 30.6% stated they were single. The educational background of the respondents varied. The largest group had completed a master's degree (36.1%), followed by those with a graduate-level education (31.9%). Smaller percentages had completed education up to the 10th standard (7.2%), reached a 10+2 level (20.3%), or pursued higher education (4.4%). The respondents had diverse occupational backgrounds where students comprised 21.7% of the sample, government employees accounted for 26.9%. Private sector employment represented 20.6%, and almost an equal percentage (21.7%) reported being unemployed. Business owners constituted 9.2% of the respondents. The most common purpose of visit among the respondents was leisure (56.4%), followed by pilgrimage (23.9%) and adventure (13.1%). A smaller proportion (6.7%) travelled to visit friends and relatives (VFR).

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents

Characteristics	Profile	Number (n)	Percentage
Gender	Male	221	61.4%
	Female	139	38.6%
Age	18-28 years	115	31.9%
	29-39 years	145	40.3%
	40-50 years	87	24.2%
	51-61 years	13	3.6%
Marital Status	Single	110	30.6%
	Married	250	69.4%
Education	upto 10th standard	26	7.2%
	10+2 level	73	20.3%
	Graduation Level	115	31.9%
	Masters Level	130	36.1%
Occupation	Higher Education	16	4.4%
	Student	78	21.7%
	Govt. Employed	97	26.9%
	Private employed	74	20.6%
	unemployed	78	21.7%
Purpose of Visit	Business	33	9.2%
	Leisure	203	56.4%
	Adventure	47	13.1%
	Pilgrimage	86	23.9%
	VFR	24	6.7%

In summary, the analysis reveals a male-majority sample, with a significant portion falling into the 29-39 years age group. Most respondents were married, had attained at least a graduate-level education, and had diverse occupational backgrounds. Leisure was the primary purpose of travel, followed by pilgrimage and adventure. These findings provide a broad understanding of the demographic characteristics and preferences of the surveyed population.

Reliability results

Zigmond (1995) defines reliability in terms of internal consistency “which is the instrument's ability to correlate with other items on the sample scale that measure the same construct”. The reliability of the survey was calculated using Cronbach's alpha. If Cronbach alpha for the scale used to measure the construct is 0.70 or higher (Nunnally, 1978), then the scale can be considered reliable. Table 2 below summarizes the outcomes of the reliability tests.

Table 2 Results of reliability test

Dimension	No. of items	ChronbachAlpha	(α) Value
Functional	04	.903	
Hedonic	05	.937	
Expressive	04	.920	
Host-Tourist Interaction	13	.867	
Place Attachment	05	.936	
Re-Visit Intention	04	.868	
Overall Scale	22	.892	

Note: Cronbach Alpha (α) for all the constructs is above the threshold level.70”

Measurement model

A measurement model with 03 first-order constructs (viz. Functional, Hedonic and Expressive) and 01 2nd Order construct (Host-Tourist Interaction) was tested through confirmatory factor analysis.

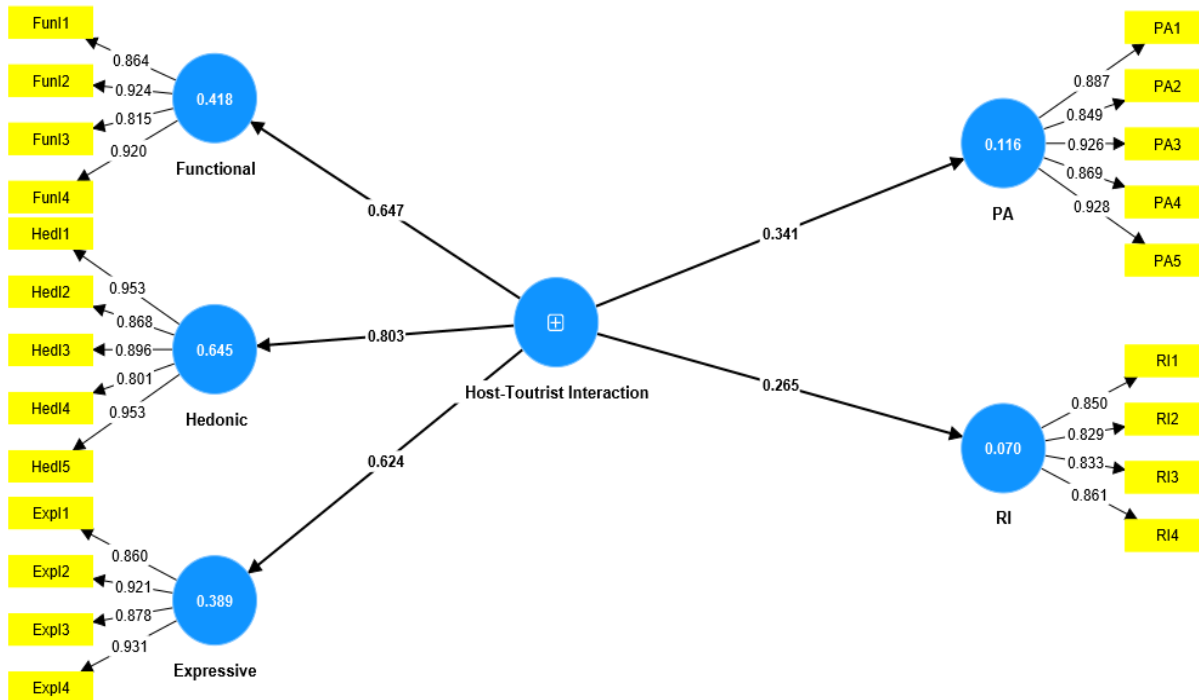


Figure 2: Overall measurement model

The first phase in a reflection model evaluation entails assessing the loading of the indicator. Loads above 0.708 are suggested, indicating that the design explains over 50 per cent of the variance of the indicator and provides therefore adequate item reliability. The indicator loadings of all the statements used in the study were checked. The indicator loadings for all statements were found to be greater than the recommended threshold value of 0.70 (Hair et.al, 2013). The indicator loadings of all the statements are shown in Table 3 as given below. The second phase is the assessment of reliability. Using Jöreskog's (1971) composite reliability to assess the reliability of the measured constructs is a valid approach. Composite Reliability (CR) was calculated for all the constructs used in the study. The results of CR for the constructs indicate that their reliability was above the recommended value of 0.70, and thus were satisfactory. The value of composite reliability is shown in Table 3 as given below. The third step of the reflection model evaluation covers the convergent validity of each construct. Convergent validity is assessed through Average Variance Extracted (AVE). A valid AVE is 0.50 or more, suggesting that the concept accounts for at least 50% of the variance in its elements. Convergent validity was calculated for the dimensions of Host-Tourist Interaction. The AVE for the variables was found to be above the recommended threshold value of 0.50 thereby holding the convergent validity. The convergent validity of all the constructs is shown in the above table 3 given above.

Table 3 Results of the overall measurement model

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	CR (above 0.7)	AVE (above 0.5)
Functional	Fun4	.919	0.933	0.778
	Fun3	.816		
	Fun2	.924		
	Fun1	.865		
Hedonic	Hed5	.953	0.953	0.803
	Hed4	.801		
	Hed3	.896		
	Hed2	.868		
	Hed1	.953		
Expressive	Expl4	.931	0.943	0.806
	Expl3	.878		
	Expl2	.921		
	Expl1	.860		
Host-Tourist Interaction	Functional	.659	0.764	0.522
	Hedonic	.809		
	Expressive	.690		
Place Attachment	PA1	.891	0.951	0.796
	PA2	.857		
	PA3	.921		
	PA4	.868		
	PA5	.923		
Revisit Intention	RI1	.803	0.910	0.717
	RI2	.845		
	RI3	.852		
	RI4	.884		

In conclusion, the measurement model exhibited satisfactory levels of both convergent validity and discriminant validity. The comprehensive results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) can be observed in Tables 3 and 4, which provide an overview of the findings regarding the reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the constructs under



investigation. Finally, the evaluation of discriminant validity was conducted. Discriminant validity refers “to the extent to which the measures are distinct from other variables and is indicated by the low correlations between the measure of interest and measures of other constructs (Ramayah et al., 2013)”. Table 4 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) shows that the results have sufficient discriminant validity because the square roots of the AVE values are greater than the correlation coefficients.

Table 4: Discriminant validity results

	Expressive	Functional	Hedonic	Host Tourist Interaction	Place Attachment	Revisit Intention
Expressive	0.898					
Functional	0.187	0.882				
Hedonic	0.221	0.280	0.896			
Host Tourist Interaction	0.623	0.647	0.803	0.629		
Place Attachment	0.202	0.195	0.295	0.340	0.892	
Revisit Intention	0.343	0.106	0.116	0.255	0.393	0.846

Hypotheses testing

The next stage is to conduct hypothesis testing once confirmatory factor analysis has been completed. Using the Smart PLS 4.0.9 software, researchers conducted SEM to test the proposed hypotheses. The findings of the study showed that Host-Tourist Interaction leads to Revisit Intention ($\beta=0.257$; $p < 0.05$) shown in Figure 3. Also, the study’s findings showed that there is a significant positive relation between Functional ($\beta=0.431$; $p < 0.05$), Hedonic ($\beta=0.391$; $p < 0.05$) and Expressive ($\beta=0.336$; $p < 0.05$) dimensions of Host-Tourist Interaction with Revisit Intention (Figure 4). Therefore, the study’s findings supported hypotheses H1 and sub-hypotheses H1a, H1b and H1c. The results of the hypotheses are summarised in Table 5.

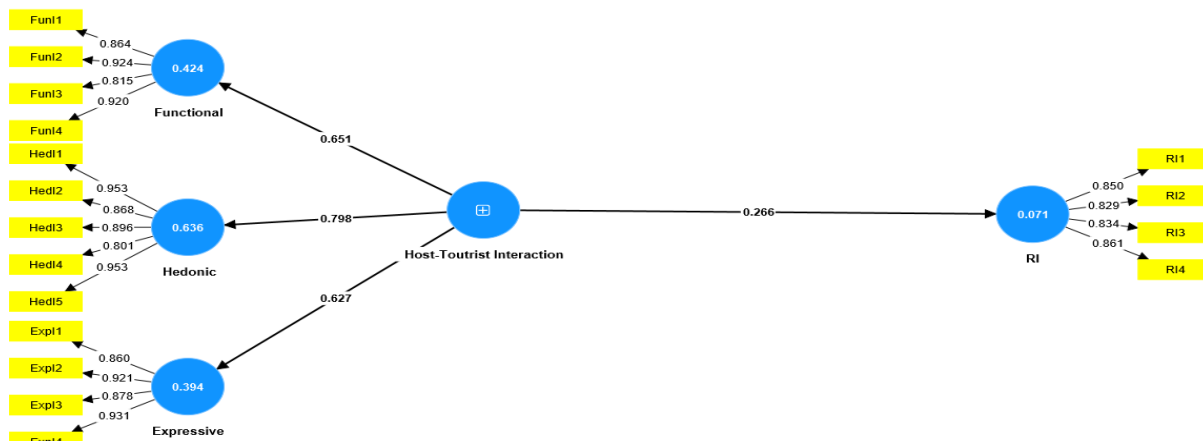


Figure 3: The estimated SEM path model.

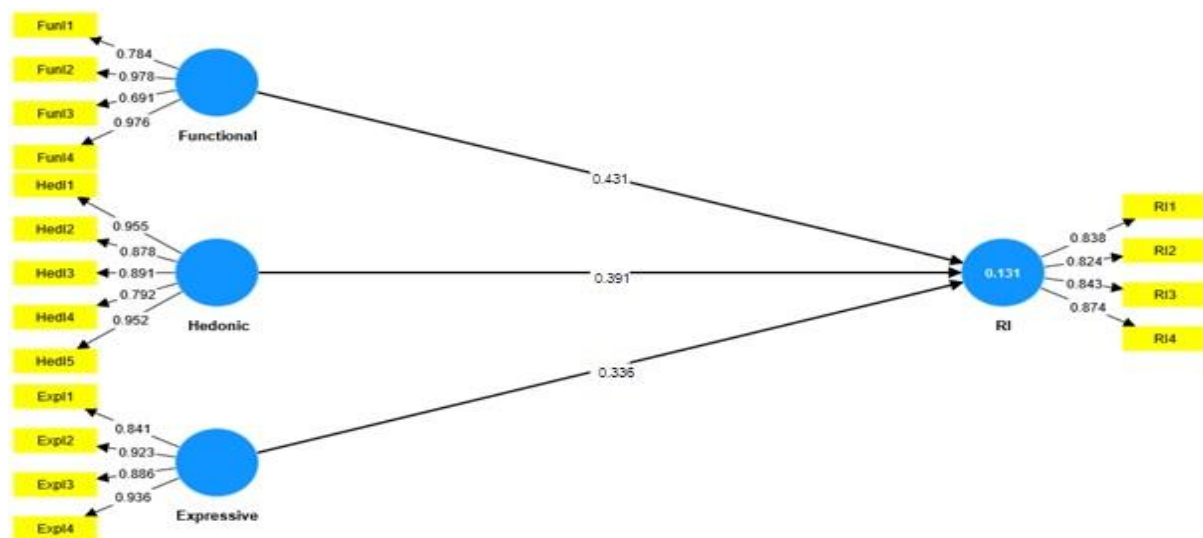


Figure 4: The estimated SEM path model

Mediation results

The study used the model to investigate whether Place Attachment mediates Host-Tourist Interaction and Revisit Intention. The mediation test was checked through Andrew Hayes’s (2017) approach. The study findings indicated that “Host-Tourist Interaction” had a significant direct effect on “Revisit Intention” ($\beta = 0.182$, $p < 0.05$) and on Place Attachment ($\beta = 0.339$, $p < 0.05$). Also, the investigation findings showed that the total effects of “Host-Tourist Interaction” and “Place Attachment” on “Revisit Intention” were also significant. The investigation's final results indicated the indirect impact of “Place Attachment”



($\beta = 0.113$, $p < 0.05$), providing evidence of partial mediation by “Place Attachment in the relationship between “Host-Tourist Interaction” and “Revisit Intention.” Hence, Hypothesis 2 is also supported. The results of the hypotheses are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5 Hypotheses testing results

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ((O/STDEV))	P values
Host-Tourist Interaction -> Revisit Intention	0.255	0.257	0.055	4.646	.000
Expressive -> Revisit Intention	0.337	0.336	0.053	6.339	.000
Functional -> Revisit Intention	0.433	0.431	0.058	7.431	.000
Hedonic -> Revisit Intention	0.398	0.391	0.061	6.409	.000
Host-Tourist Interaction -> Place Attachment -> Revisit Intention	0.118	0.119	0.025	4.709	.000

Discussion

The analysis conducted in this study aimed to investigate the association between the interaction between hosts and tourists, the intention to revisit, and the attachment to a place. The study's findings revealed significant connections, providing valuable insights into the factors that influence tourists' inclination to revisit a particular destination. The preliminary findings of the study revealed a positive correlation between host-tourist interaction and the intention to revisit the destination. This suggests that when tourists engage in interactions with local hosts, it increases their likelihood of considering a return visit. This outcome is consistent with prior research conducted by Tabaeian et al. (2022), Nugroho et al. (2021), and Lai et al. (2021), who also found similar associations between host-tourist interaction and revisit intention. Furthermore, the statistical analysis conducted in the study confirmed a significant direct impact of host-tourist interaction on revisit intention, providing support for hypothesis H1. This indicates that the more positive and meaningful the interactions between hosts and tourists, the stronger the intention of tourists to revisit the destination. These findings highlight the importance of host-tourist interactions in influencing tourists' revisit intentions and emphasize the role of local hosts in shaping tourists' experiences and perceptions. The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence of the positive relationship between host-tourist interaction and revisit intention, reinforcing the significance of fostering such interactions in the tourism industry. Furthermore, the study explored the dimensions of Host-Tourist Interaction, namely Functional, Hedonic, and Expressive, and their impact on Revisit Intention. The results of the study indicated that the three dimensions examined exhibited a favourable impact on the inclination of tourists to engage in repeat visitation. Tabaeian et al. (2022) reported consistent findings with respect to the hedonic and functional interactions in their study. The impact of expressive interaction on brand loyalty has yielded comparable outcomes in investigations carried out by Rahman & Noor (2014) and Mitchell & Imrie (2011). This implies that when tourists perceive functional, hedonic, and expressive aspects in their interactions with hosts, they are more likely to consider revisiting the destination. These results provided support for the sub-hypotheses H1a, H1b, and H1c, which proposed the positive relationships between these dimensions and Revisit Intention.

Furthermore, the study also explored the potential mediating role of Place Attachment in the relationship between Host-Tourist Interaction and Revisit Intention. The findings revealed that Place Attachment had a noteworthy impact on Revisit Intention. This implies that when tourists form a strong emotional connection to the visited place, it positively affects their intention to revisit and their interactions with local hosts. Interestingly, the study also discovered that Place Attachment partially mediated the association between Host-Tourist Interaction and Revisit Intention. This indicates that while Host-Tourist Interaction directly influences Revisit Intention, a portion of its impact is channelled through Place Attachment. In other words, tourists' attachment to the place plays a role in translating interactions with hosts into a greater intention to revisit. These findings contribute to a greater understanding of the interrelationships between Host-Tourist Interaction, Place Attachment, and Return Intention. They emphasize the value of fostering interactions between hosts and visitors, as well as the significance of nurturing a sense of attachment to the destination. These insights can guide tourism practitioners and policymakers in developing strategies to enhance tourists' experiences, increase revisit rates, and foster sustainable tourism development.

Managerial implications

The study's findings emphasise the importance of promoting interactions between hosts and tourists. Tourism planners can facilitate these interactions by implementing programs or initiatives that encourage local hosts to engage with visitors in a friendly and welcoming manner. The implementation of training programs for hosts to improve their communication skills, cultural awareness, and customer service is a possible implication of these findings. Tourism planners can facilitate meaningful interactions between hosts and travelers by providing hosts with the necessary skills and knowledge. This can considerably increase the likelihood that visitors will return to the destination. Improving the quality of interactions between hosts and visitors is one way for destinations to attract and retain visitors over the long term. The dimensions of Host-Tourist Interaction were found to significantly influence tourists' revisit intentions. Tourism planners can leverage these findings by developing experiential tourism offerings that cater to these dimensions. For instance, creating opportunities for tourists to engage in authentic cultural experiences, participate in local festivals or events, and interact with local artisans or performers can enhance the hedonic and expressive aspects of their interactions. Similarly, providing functional amenities and services that cater to tourists' needs and preferences can contribute to functional interactions. By curating such experiences, tourism planners can enhance the overall satisfaction of tourists and increase the likelihood of repeat visits.

The study emphasised the importance of place attachment as a mediator between host-tourist interactions and intention to return. Tourism planners can focus on cultivating a sense of place attachment among tourists by emphasising the unique cultural, historical, and natural attributes of the destination. This can be achieved through interpretation programs, storytelling initiatives, heritage preservation efforts, and community involvement. By fostering a strong emotional connection between



tourists and the destination, tourism planners can enhance revisit intentions and encourage visitors to develop a long-lasting attachment to the place. Tourism planners can help ensure a destination's long-term viability by placing a focus on tourist-host interactions and the feeling of belonging there. Engaging with the local community, promoting responsible tourism practices, and supporting local businesses can create a favourable environment for interactions. In addition, by nurturing place attachment, tourism planners can encourage visitors to develop a sense of responsibility for the destination, resulting in more sustainable tourism practices and long-term support for conservation and preservation efforts. In conclusion, tourism planners can benefit from the findings of this study by focusing on improving host-tourist interactions, developing experiential offerings, cultivating place attachment, promoting sustainable practices, and implementing robust monitoring and evaluation systems. By incorporating these implications into their planning and decision-making processes, tourism planners can create a more welcoming and engaging environment for tourists, leading to increase revisit intentions and long-term destination loyalty.

Limitations and directions for future study

While the study offers valuable insights into the relationship between Host-Tourist Interaction, Revisit Intention, and Place Attachment, it is crucial to recognise and acknowledge certain limitations that may impact the generalizability and interpretation of the study's findings. The results of the study are based on a sample, and the characteristics of the participants may not be representative of the complete tourist population. Therefore, caution should be used when applying the findings to diverse tourism settings or tourist populations. The study employs a cross-sectional design, collecting data at a particular time point. This design limitation prevents the establishment of causal relationships between variables. While the study identifies associations and provides insights into the relationships under investigation, it cannot determine the directionality or long-term effects of these relationships. Future research employing longitudinal or experimental designs could provide more robust evidence and enhance the understanding of causality.

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