

## On the Attachment Characteristics of Tourists in Shaxi Ancient Town of Jianchuan County Based on the Place Attachment Theory

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**Abstract:** Based on the review of domestic and foreign research on place attachment, the concept, source and research significance of place attachment are defined. Taking Shaxi Ancient Town in Jianchuan County as the research object, this paper analyzes the tourism resources and tourists attachment characteristics of Shaxi Ancient Town with in-depth interviews, puts forward some suggestions such as creating tourism creative projects, expanding tourism activity space, innovating tourism publicity and improving tourism infrastructure.

### 1. Introduction

Since foreign humanistic geographers began to pay attention to the place theory at the 1970s, the research on the place attachment theory has gradually deepened, which has become a research hotspot in the field of leisure and recreation in western countries. The study of the attachment characteristics of tourists, such as the attachment degree and the factors influencing the attachment degree is of positive significance for tourism planners and tourism managers to adjust the tourism development ideas in time, plan, design and transform reasonably and upgrade the corresponding tourism public service facilities, infrastructure and tourism landscape, and improve the quality of tourism development and service.

### 2. Research Review

#### 2.1. Data Sources

According to CNKI's advanced search, as of March 22, 2019, there are 201 Chinese documents and 2640 foreign documents related to "local attachment" or "place attachment". The number of documents has been increasing year by year, especially since 2010, the number of foreign documents has risen sharply and exceeded Chinese ones (Figure 1). There are 391 Chinese documents and 280 foreign documents about "local attachment" or "place attachment", including place sense, place identity, tourists, satisfaction, tourism destinations, residents, locality, rural tourism, place dependence, ancient villages, loyalty, influencing factors, etc. Among them, the keywords contain 314 journal documents of "local attachment" or "place attachment", including 114 core journals, 86 excellent master's theses, 3 excellent doctoral theses and 13 important conference papers.

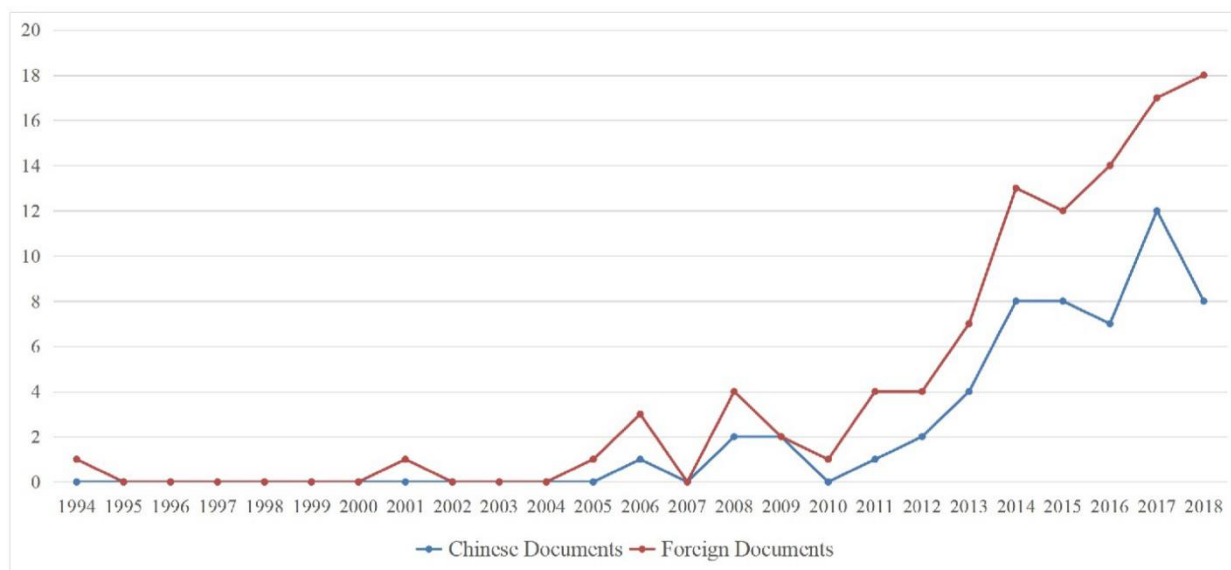


Figure 1 Annual statistics of place attachment research on domestic and foreign tourist destinations from 1994 to 2018

## 2.2. Aspects of Research

The current research mainly focuses on the following four aspects by categorizing the data: conceptual definition, influencing factors, formation mechanism and methodological framework of place attachment.

### 2.2.1. Research on the Definition of Place Attachment Concept

The study of place attachment in foreign countries began with the concept of "Topophilia" proposed by Tuan Y.F (1976), which is considered to be the emotional connection between people, places and environment. Gerson et al. (1977) put forward the term of place attachment, but did not give a clear definition. Williams and Roggenbuck (1989) defined place attachment as a connection between people and places based on emotion (sentiment, feelings), cognition (thoughts, knowledge, beliefs) and practice (actions, behaviors) (Zhou Huiling, Xu Chunxiao & Tang Qiansong, 2010; Du facheng, Li Wenyong & Qi Xingyu, 2018). Scannell et al. (2010) put forward that "place attachment" is composed of three aspects of "human-psychological process-place" (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Zhu Hong and Liu Bo (2011) pointed out that place attachment and place identity are two related but unique concepts, which should be effectively distinguished in the research process. Place attachment can affect place identity (Zhu Hong & Liu Bo, 2011).

### 2.2.2. Research on the Influencing Factors of Place Attachment

Wang Kun et al. (2013) proposed that tourists' involvement is the individual motivation and psychological state arising from recreational activities, tourist destinations and their related products in the evaluation of the impact of tourists' involvement on place attachment in cultural tourism areas, which has the same driving force as tourism motivation (Wang Kun, Huang Zhenfang, Fang Yelin & Zhang Hongxia, 2013). Dai Xujun and Liu Aili (2019) acclaimed that the analysis from multiple theoretical perspectives is an important direction of the research on the influencing factors and mechanism of place identity in the future (Dai Xujun & Liu Aili, 2019). Luo Xuwu et al. (2017) pointed out that the place attachment degree of residents is generally high, among which the emotional attachment of residents toward the ancient town is greater than the functional attachment. However, due to dependency type, residence time, cultural background, religious beliefs, and the sense of belonging of "home", the place attachment degree of indigenous residents is higher than that of non-indigenous residents. In view of place factors, religious beliefs, environmental conditions, participation in activities and social relationships are the key factors affecting place attachment of residents (Luo Xuwu, Xu Xiumei & Li Youchang, 2017).

### **2.2.3. Research on the Formation Mechanism of Place Attachment in Tourist Destinations**

Gross et al. (2008) studied the influencing factors of tourists' involvement in the model in two dimensions of place attachment and place identity with the help of structural equation model, and found that travel experience and food are positively related to place attachment (Gross & Brown, 2008). Lee (2001) obtained that destination attraction and family travel habits can also affect place attachment by studying the influencing factors of travel experience, travel habits, first age, destination attraction, satisfaction and familiarity in the multiple linear regression model (Lee, 2001). Zhou Xuejun and Yu kaihong (2019) put forward place attachment has a significant impact on tourists' satisfaction and loyalty. Tourists' satisfaction plays a part of intermediary role in the relationship between place attachment and tourists' loyalty, and this intermediary role is regulated by leisure benefits (Zhou Xuejun & Yu kaihong, 2019).

### **2.2.4. Research on the Methodological Framework of Place Attachment in Tourism Destinations**

Huang Xiang and Bao Jigang (2006) described the two dimensions of place attachment, namely the mathematical relationship between place dependence and place identity, and constructed the CDEEM research framework of "place attachment" theory (Huang Xiang, Bao Jigang & wall Geoffrey, 2006). Tang Wenyue (2007) explored the main fields and progress, the dimensions and elements of main concepts and proposed the ODTG framework of place sense research (Tang Wenyue, 2007). Meng Lingmin et al. (2018) pointed out that building types, landscape nodes and street patterns are important place components, which carry place attachment traits of different strengths and properties with a certain spatial structure (Meng Lingmin, Zhao Zhenbin & Zhang Jianrong, 2018).

### **2.2.5. Summary**

The research on place attachment at home and abroad is in the stage of rapid development. The research content mainly focuses on concept definition, discussion of influencing factors, exploration of formation mechanism and development of application fields. However, it should also be noted that the research has the following limitations. In terms of research content, there are problems such as the theoretical system has not been fully established, the mechanism of influence has not been deeply analyzed and the application field has not been deeply explored. In terms of research methods, quantitative analysis is used more, but qualitative research that can truly reflect the true emotions and connotations of tourism subjects and tourism destinations is less (Xu Guoliang, Huang Xianjin, Zhou Yan, Xu Yuting & Li Jianbao, 2017; Wu Limin, Huang Zhenfang, Wang Kun & Zhang Chen, 2015).

## **3. Definition of Basic Concepts**

### **3.1. Definition of Place Attachment**

Combining the relevant research results of domestic and foreign scholars, the concept of place attachment is defined as: people carry out a series of cognitions in a specific place, which creates an emotional connection between people and the place, and the emotion is positively connected. It is called place attachment when people are tempted to have feelings and desire to arrive at the place. According to the difference of the degree of relationship between tourists and the place, it is divided into destination attachment, habitat attachment, tourism attachment, community attachment (Zhou Huiling, Xu Chunxiao & Tang Qiansong, 2010; Du facheng, Li Wenyong & Qi Xingyu, 2018; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Zhu Hong & Liu Bo, 2011).

### **3.2. The Source of Place Attachment**

The place attachment of tourists mainly comes from two aspects. On the one hand, tourists rely on the functional facilities of tourist destinations. That is to say, if tourist destinations want to improve the "place attachment" level of tourists, they must have more perfect, scientific and

functional facilities that can meet specific tourism purposes. Second, tourists have emotional recognition of tourist destinations. This emotion mainly comes from cognition and practice, such as tourists going to travel destinations. For example, tourists feel good about a tourist destination after they have been there once, and they want to go back later. That is to say, place attachment can be formed, guided and developed in the future, with strong flexibility, and varies from person to person (Wu Limin, Huang Zhenfang, Wang Kun & Zhang Chen, 2015).

### 3.3. Research Significance

Through the study of place attachment theory, it can help the planners, managers and operators of tourists destinations to better think from the perspective of tourists, understand the needs and preferences of tourists, and avoid subjective and unfounded development (Wang Kun, Huang Zhenfang, Fang Yelin & Zhang Hongxia, 2013), making the development of tourism resources more reasonable, tourism design more scientific, tourism services more human-oriented, and then achieve the purpose of increasing tourists' revisiting and recommending intention and enhancing the competitiveness of tourist destinations.

## 4. Analysis on the Attachment Characteristics of Tourists in Shaxi Ancient Town

### 4.1. Overview of Shaxi Ancient Town

Located in the southwest of Jianchuan County, Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture, Shaxi Ancient Town is connected with Niujie township of Eryuan County in the east, Qiaohou town of Eryuan County in the south, Misha township of Jianchuan County in the west and Diannan town of Jianchuan County in the north. It is a minority residence mainly composed of Bai nationality and inhabited by Han, Yi and Lisu nationalities. Shaxi Ancient Town is located in the "Shangri-La Eco-tourism area" in the northwest of Yunnan Province, where the overall layout of tourism development is "one core, one circle, four belts, five areas and eight corridors". It enjoys obvious advantages in tourism location but under competitive pressure due to its surroundings of Lijiang ancient town, Shibao Mountain, Eryuan hot spring group and other famous tourist attractions. As it is 34 kilometers away from Jianchuan County, 150 kilometers away from Dali City (the capital of Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture), 450 kilometers away from Kunming City, 99 kilometers away from Lijiang City, 210 kilometers away from Shangri-La, the traffic location is relatively not competitive (Figure 2).



Figure 2 Traffic location of Shaxi Ancient Town

## 4.2. Conditions of Tourism Resources

### 4.2.1. Natural Resources

Shaxi Ancient Town is rich in natural resources, mainly including geological landform, climate and meteorology and plant resources (Table 1).

Table 1 Natural resources of Shaxi Ancient Town

Factors	Contents
Geological landform	Shaxi ancient town is located in Shaxi basin, surrounded by mountains. As the river system of Lancang River, Heihui River runs through the whole basin from north to south. The terrain of the basin is high in the north and low in the south, with an average altitude of 2100 meters. Miziping village, located at the south end of basin, has an altitude of 1973 meters, which is the lowest altitude point in the territory. Sankezhuang village, located at the east end, has an altitude of 3150 meters, which is the highest altitude point. The transverse distance between East and West is 28km, and the longitudinal distance between North and south is 35km.
Climate and meteorology	The climate belongs to the warm and cool layer of the south temperate zone, with an average annual temperature of 12.3 °C, an annual sunshine duration of 2400 hours and an annual precipitation of 790 mm. The middle part of basin possesses the lowest precipitation in the county, with a precipitation of 671 mm and a frost-free period of about 215 days.
Plant resources	It belongs to the species gene bank in northwestern Yunnan, with a wide variety of plants, and native tree species (eucalyptus, berberine, eucalyptus, poplar, etc.), fruits, flowers, fungi, medicinal plants and aquatic plants all over the town.

### 4.2.2. Cultural Resources

Shaxi ancient town is rich in cultural resources, with deep connotation and high quality, mainly including tangible cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage (Table 2).

Table 2 Cultural resources of Shaxi Ancient Town

	Factors	Contents
Tangible cultural heritage	Street pattern	Street organization with public buildings as the main node, the direction and context of traditional roads and traditional street pavement.
	Rivers and ditches	Heihui River, gullies and streams around village groups, ditch systems within and around villages, etc.
	Cultural relics and historic buildings	Kuixing Pavilion with ancient stage, ancient market, Xingjiao Temple, ancient village gate, Ouyang Courtyard, traditional houses, etc.
	Historical environment elements	Ancient trees, ancient bridges (Yujin Bridge), ancient tea-horse roads, streets, courtyards, mountains, waters and rural areas.
Intangible cultural heritage and folk custom	Traditional performing arts	Bai Folk Songs, Yunnan Opera, Rattle Stick Dance, Cattle Dance, etc.
	Folk activities, etiquette, festivals	Singing Festival in Shibao Mountain, "March Street", "God Association", Festival of Sakyamuni on February 8 of the lunar calendar, "Torch Festival", Rural Drama, wedding and other festivals.
	Apparel	Bai and Yi traditional clothing.
	Diet	Goat's milk cake, eight bowls, <u>bean jelly</u> , Shaxi sheet jelly, tofu, hand-cut rice noodle, white cake, pork liver in cold sauce, etc.
	Folk traditional knowledge and practice	Farming culture, Buddhist culture, caravan culture, salt well culture, ancient opera culture, architectural culture, catering culture, etc.
	Traditional handicraft skills	Embroidery, tie dyeing, batik, wood carving, stone carving, etc.

### **4.3. Analysis on the Attachment Characteristics of Tourists**

Through field research and in-depth interviews, the place attachment degree of tourists in Shaxi Ancient Town is generally above average.

The main aspects of high place attachment show as follows. Firstly, the historical and cultural aspects, which is represented by the horse culture, Pu'er tea culture and farming culture. Secondly, the national culture, which includes the opera culture, architectural culture and catering culture of the Bai nationality. Thirdly, the leisure atmosphere, which has leisure cafes and national characteristic inns and characterized by relaxing and relieving stress.

The main aspects of low place attachment show as follows. Firstly, there are obvious shortages in the setting of tourism projects. Tourists generally believe that the attraction of tourism projects is insufficient and their evaluation is not high, especially the participation and experiential projects are seriously lacking. Secondly, the characteristics of Shaxi Ancient Town are not prominent. Compared with other ancient towns, there is a certain degree of similarity, and the problem of homogenization needs to be improved. Thirdly, the tourism infrastructure is imperfect. Except for Sifang Street, the entire Shaxi Ancient Town has many simple stone benches, weeds and loess piles. Landscape sketches, ecological green spaces and leisure places are obviously insufficient.

## **5. Suggestions**

### **5.1. Tourism Creative Projects Should be Created**

Based on the analysis of competition and cooperation with the surrounding tourist attractions, the creative creation of characteristic tourism projects is carried out to avoid identical development. The mode and path of cultural and tourism integration are innovated and the degree of its activation and utilization is improved according to the rich historical and cultural resources of Shaxi Ancient Town, such as ancient tea-horse road, Bai architectural culture, traditional opera, etc. Unique tourism festivals should be created by relying on farmer's harvest festival and other agricultural festivals, such as Bai nationality "March Street", "God Association", "Torch Festival" and other national festivals.

### **5.2. Tourism Activity Space Should be Expanded**

In view of the similarity and homogeneity between Shaxi Ancient Town and other tourism towns, on the basis of further concise tourism theme and in-depth search for features, Shaxi Ancient Town can combine with resources such as a large number of farmland landscape, mountain forest resources, traditional villages and Heihui River and the like outside the ancient town, carry out tourism activities such as horse riding, farming experience, fruit picking, mountain riding and water rafting and the like so as to further expand tourism activity space, extend the time of tourism activities, improve the degree of tourism experience and improve the satisfaction and attachment of tourists.

### **5.3. Tourism Publicity Should be Innovated**

Investment in tourism publicity and marketing should be increased. The tourism image of Shaxi Ancient Town should be further refined. Memorable tourism publicity slogans easy to remember should be created. While maintaining the traditional 4Ps tourism publicity mode, the Internet thinking to actively connect with famous online live platforms such as Douyu, Panda TV, Huya live broadcast, Penguin e-competition, Longzhu live broadcast and the like should be adopted to create economic mode of online celebrity to promote the development of tourism industry in Shaxi Ancient Town.

### **5.4. Tourism Infrastructure Should be Improved**

The tourism infrastructure such as tourist toilets, guide signs, landscape sketches and ecological green spaces and the like should be improved. The tourist comfort is suggested to be enhanced. Much attention should be paid to the creation of characteristic homestay, the injection of modern

life style on the basis of maintaining the original cultural texture and the excavation and sorting of characteristic meals and drinks. Tourist quality should be improved and the added value of tourism should be enhanced.

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