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The mediating effect of place attachment on the relationship between golf tourism destination image and revisit intention

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ABSTRACT

Focusing on golf tourism in Hainan Province, this study examined the relationship between place attachment, golf tourism destination image, and revisit intention of golf tourists. Data were obtained using questionnaires distributed to golf tourists in Hainan Province, China in 2016. Survey data from 218 tourists indicated that destination image was positively related to place attachment. Moreover, place attachment mediated the relationship between destination image and revisit intention. Implications of these findings for golf tourism marketing strategies as well as future research directions are discussed.

KEYWORDS

Place attachment; golf tourism; destination image; revisit intention; golf industry; golf tourist

Introduction

Golf tourism has become a bright spot in the growth of the tourism industry in China. Hainan Province, in southern China, is a major golf tourism destination due to its privileged location and weather conditions. At the end of 2016, 42 golf courses (a total of 910 holes) existed in Hainan Province, each of which was equivalent to 18-hole courses. More than a million golfers have visited Hainan Province, representing over two million rounds sold and resulting in the exchange of 25 billion dollars (The People's Government of Hainan Province, 2016). Golf tourism has become one of the most important pillars in promoting the development of Hainan Province. However, the golf tourism industry there lacks clear recognition of tourist motivation in choosing golf destinations. Analyzing tourism factors that affect whether golfers return to Hainan Province should help marketers understand tourist behavior better.

According to Simon (2010), golf tourism occurs when tourists away from their primary residence play golf for non-commercial purposes. Golf tourism involves services provided by travel agencies that specialize in planning and operating golf tourism products. Golf tourism tours consist of visiting golf courses far from one's primary residence, engaging in

leisure activities, and visiting local tourist attractions (Lee, Kyle, & Scott, 2012; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Several researchers have identified various characteristics of golf tourists, such as segmentation (e.g. score/handicap; Hennessey, MacDonald, & MacEachern, 2008; Petrick, 2004) and subculture (Bryan, 2000). Other researchers have focused on the behaviors of golf tourists. Humphreys (2014) found that participation in golf tourism was driven by satisfaction and positive experiences, while Stebbins (2006) found that attitude was a strong predictor. Another important factor is golf destination image (Geissler, 2005; Humphreys, 2014; Hutchinson, Wang, & Lai, 2010). Given the growth of the golf tourism market in China, understanding how factors such as destination image and place attachment influence revisit intention is important. Tourists select destinations to visit based on the image of those destinations, and the overall image of a destination has the most significant effect on destination selection (Lee & Allen, 1999). Golf destinations share attributes with other tourism products (Correia, Oliveira, & Silva, 2009), and destination image combines various perceptions, including food, climate, and natural environment (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). One study found that destination image directly influenced behavioral intention and revisit intention (Chen & Tsai, 2007). Other

researchers have found that destination image had a meaningful and causal effect on selecting a destination and behavior during travel (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Riley, 1995). Research findings also indicate that a destination with vast natural resources affected how tourists evaluate destination image and generated place attachment (Warzecha & Lime, 2001; Williams & Stewart, 1998), and various studies (Chung, Lee, & Lin, 2016; Jiang, Ramkissoon, Mavondo, & Feng, 2017; Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck, & Watson, 1992) have reported that tourism destination image influenced place attachment.

Place attachment refers to people's affective bonds to a physical setting (Williams et al., 1992). Low and Altman (1992) explained that place attachment consists of various concepts from other knowledge fields, including place identity and place dependence (Moore & Graefe, 1994; Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983). Many researchers have conducted studies on place attachment and found that place attachment was an important predictor of tourist behavior. Park, Lee, and Chen (2011) suggested that place attachment influenced satisfaction with a destination. Kyle, Bricker, Graefe, and Wickham (2004), as well as Graham, Andrew, and Guy (2016), identified that place attachment positively influenced behavioral intention and revisit intention. Petrick and Backman (2002) found that golfers became attached to specific golf courses due to their special scenery or services that promoted enjoyment of the game. Generally speaking, place attachment influences the choice to return to golf destinations.

Revisit intention is generally measured as a consequence of an attitude that influences a revisit decision. Petrick (2004) noted that unique experiences or satisfaction with golf courses are important factors in revisit intention. Revisit intention is important to measure because it is directly tied to the competitiveness of a particular destination and because intention generally leads to actual behavior (Lee et al., 2012). However, few studies have examined the relationships among destination image, place attachment, and revisit intention in golf tourism. Furthermore, exploration of the mediating role of place attachment between destination image and revisit intention is limited.

Literature review and research hypotheses

The present study not only reviews studies about destination image, place attachment, and revisit intention but also discusses their interrelationships based on

existing findings. This section concludes with future research directions that has guided our study.

Destination image

Destination image is established when people visit a particular destination and develop an overall perception of the place, including emotional response and knowledge of its characteristics (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). Tasci and Gartner (2007) proposed that destination image is an inner system of objective thoughts that include various feelings, intentions, and opinions regarding a tourism destination. Alaeddinoglu and Can (2010) noted that destination image also refers to perceptions, thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes related to particular characteristics of a destination. According to Gunn (1972), destination image develops through seven formation stages, which fall under three categories: *organic*, *induced*, and *modified induced*. The *organic* and *induced* images are formed before tourists visit the destination from sources such as television, books, school lessons, travel brochures, publicity, and advertisements. The *modified induced* image results from personal experience of the destination. According to Beerli and Martin (2004), destination image has a cognitive and affective dimension. A cognitive image is the evaluation of destination characteristics, such as quality of tourism experiences, attractions, environment, and value for money (Gibson, Qi, & Zhang, 2008), and an affective image comprises the emotional aspects that tourists experience during a visit. Baloglu and McCleary (1999) and Baloglu and Mangalolu (2001) reported that affective image is measured on four scales: pleasant-unpleasant, relaxing-distressing, arousing-sleepy, and exciting-gloomy. Based on previous studies, destination image is a comprehensive concept with various constructs, including cognitive and affective dimensions (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2006). Destination image has been found to influence destination revisit intention (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2005). According to Humphreys (2014), location amenities and golf-related features (e.g. course quality, facilities) determine the popularity of golf destinations. Furthermore, Pereira, Correia, and Schutz (2015) reported that golf destination image consists of hospitality, uniqueness, and attractiveness.

Scholars have shown that when a destination enhanced its perceived quality, place attachment increased (Jiang et al., 2017; Lee & Allen, 1999; Moore & Graefe, 1994). Place attachment is important

to revisit intention (George, 2004), and various studies have shown that tourist destination image significantly impacted revisit intention (Bigne, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Cheng & Lu, 2013; Kim, Park, & Kim, 2016; Zhang, Xu, Leung, & Cai, 2016). Revisiting a destination, attending an event again, and engaging in word-of-mouth communication (WOM) about a place are examples of behavioral intention relevant to tourism (Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2010). Court and Lupton (1997) found that a positive destination image strengthened revisit intention among travelers. Hence, the present study assumed that destination image would positively impact revisit intention among golf tourists.

H1: Golf tourism destination image will positively relate to place attachment.

H2: Golf tourism destination image will positively relate to revisit intention.

Place attachment

The theory of place attachment was first applied to the tourism industry in the 1980s (Tsai, 2016). Place attachment is a psychological feeling, based on the accumulated experience of a place, that carries both affective and symbolic meaning. Place attachment reflects the intensity of a two-fold bond between people and a place: (a) functional bond (relating to specific attractions and settings) and (b) emotional bond (relating to special feelings and features that symbolize those feelings) (Wynveen, Kyle, & Sutton, 2012).

Place attachment includes symbolic meaning and emotional expression. According to Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001), place attachment refers to the emotional connection people feel to a location (e.g. enjoying a place that generates feelings of comfort and safety). Gieryn (2000) stated that place attachment was the link between people and places based on feelings (e.g. emotions), cognition (e.g. knowledge and beliefs), and practice (e.g. actions and behaviors). Kyle, Graefe, and Manning (2005) showed that place attachment included place identity, place dependence, and social bonding. Analyzing place attachment for water parks, Bingxi (2002) subdivided its factors into psychological dependence, functional dependence, and lifestyle attachment. Williams et al. (1992) argued that place dependence and place identity comprised place attachment. Place dependence, which is a type of functionality dependence, is based on how tourists evaluate a specific place. Place identity refers to a person's emotional connection to a

destination, a connection that develops through a process of self-regulation. Williams and Vaske (2003) used the psychometric method to design a place attachment scale and verified a two-dimensional conceptual framework (i.e. place identity and place dependence) for leisure and tourism destinations. Therefore, in the present study, place attachment measurement items were constructed based on these two dimensions.

Place attachment constitutes a complex relationship between emotional expression and behavior. Hwang, Lee, and Chen (2005) noted that the number of visits to and the time spent at a destination affected level of attachment. High attachment might increase revisit intention, leading to higher purchase intention and ultimately enhancing loyalty to a tourism destination (George, 2004). The greater attachment tourists have to a specific location, the more frequently they will visit that destination. Therefore, the present study posited that place attachment would positively influence revisit intention among golf tourists (see Kim, Lee, & Lee, 2017).

H3: Place attachment will positively impact revisit intention.

Revisit intention

Tourists choose the same destination because their affective commitment to the place increases their intention to purchase the same tourism product or service again (Oliver, 1999). According to Lee et al. (2012), the measure of repeat purchase behavior includes four dimensions: (a) proportion of a brand compared to all brands in the same category, (b) usage duration and history, (c) amount of time required to purchase, (d) number of times the consumer has purchased or used a product or service. Yuksel, Yuksel, and Bilim (2010) found that place attachment influenced repeat visitation. Examining overseas tourists golfing in Spain, Ramírez-Hurtado and Berbel-Pineda (2015) identified four factors that motivated golf tourists to revisit a golf tourism destination: (a) demographic variables, (b) the characteristics of travel, (c) the main purpose of the trip, and (d) the degree of satisfaction with the travel experience.

However, no studies on leisure and tourism have examined the structural relationship between destination image and revisit intention, with place attachment as a mediator. Based on geography, aesthetic appeal, and golfing attributes, many courses are

frequently visited by the same consumers, and golf tourism destinations have been shown to generate stronger emotional attachment than other tourism destinations (Huang & Hsu, 2009). Based on the destination image and place attachment constructs discussed above, the present study proposed the following conceptual model (see Figure 1).

Methods

Participants

This study analyzed golfers who visited the same respective courses in Hainan Province. This popular geographical location, which attracts almost 1,000,000 golf tourists annually, was selected for two reasons. First, the golf market in Hainan Province is mature, and Chinese national policy supports the development of the golf industry. Second, the wonderful scenery and environment attracts many golf tourists; so revisitation rates are relatively high, suggesting a high level of place attachment.

An online questionnaire was created (<http://www.sojump.com>), and the China Youth Travel Service assisted in data collection. Six of the eight tour guides we approached agreed to recruit participants for this study. After receiving recruitment training, the 6 guides randomly contacted 300 golf tourists who were at least 18 years old and had played golf in the previous 2 years in Hainan Province to ask them to take in the online survey. At this time, an oral survey was conducted to distinguish golf visitors from non-golf visitors. Once the participants agreed ($N = 240$), the tour guides sent the online survey link

to them via email. The survey did not collect any sensitive personal information. Although participants did not complete a consent form, they verbally agreed to participate in the study after reading the instructions and research explanation. All of the participants were Chinese (24% from Fujian, 21% from Beijing, 17% from Guangdong, 14% from Shandong, 11% from Zhejiang, 9% from Shanghai, 4% from other provinces) and had stayed at least one night in Hainan Province for the purpose of golf tourism. Demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 1.

Construction measurement

The research questionnaire included three sections: golf tourism destination image, place attachment, and revisit intention. To avoid personal bias, 5-point Likert scales were used, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Destination image

Several measurement items were used to assess various aspects of destination image (DI). Questionnaires were developed based on the thorough literature review conducted for this study. Golf tourism destination image (DI) was measured using two subscales: cognitive image (CI; Beerli & Martin, 2004) and affective image (AI; Baloglu & Mangalolu, 2001). The CI scale from Beerli and Martin (2004) showed high reliability and strongly predicted the post-visit. Baloglu and Mangalolu (2001) showed that their AI scale was reliable and valid in multicultural tourism contexts. Questionnaire items included

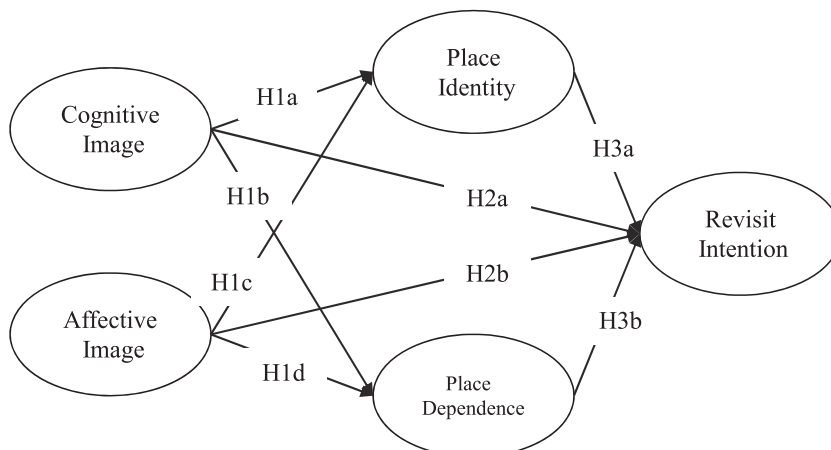


Figure 1. Hypothesized conceptual model.

Table 1. Characteristics of respondents.

	Division	N	%
Gender	Male	136	62.4
	Female	82	37.6
Age	Under 20yrs	25	11.5
	20–29yrs	103	47.2
	30–39yrs	40	18.3
	40–49yrs	35	16.1
	50–59yrs	14	6.4
	60 and older	1	.5
Profession	Management	84	38.5
	Technical	6	2.8
	Professional	2	.9
	Sales	23	10.6
	Clerical	16	7.3
	Education	22	10.1
	Skilled work	21	9.6
Education	Non-skilled work	44	20.2
	High school graduate	11	5.0
	In college now	63	28.9
	College graduate	90	41.3
	Advanced degree	49	22.5
Income	Other	5	2.3
	Under 1000 dollar	77	35.3
	1000–1500 dollar	35	16.1
	1501–2000dollar	26	11.9
Frequency	More than 2001dollar	80	36.7
	1–2 times a year	123	56.4
	3–4 times a year	39	17.9
	5–6 times a year	23	10.6
	More than 6 times a year	33	15.1
Total		218	100

“Hainan Province has a great variety of fauna and flora,” “There are interesting cultural and historical features in Hainan Province,” “Hainan Province has a pleasant wealth and beauty of landscape,” “Hainan Province has interesting golf activities,” “Hainan Province is a pleasant place,” and “Hainan Province is a relaxing place.” Nine questions used to measure DI, including five CI items and four AI items.

Place attachment

Our conceptualization and measurement of place attachment (PA) was based on Williams and Roggenbuck (1989) and of Kyle et al. (2005), who identified place identity (PI) and place dependence (PD) as two components in the human–place bond. Their efforts demonstrated that the scale is a valid and reliable measure. Williams and Vaske (2003) also tested the validity and generalizability of this conceptualization and confirmed the existence of a two-dimensional structure (i.e. PI and PD) for PA across several tourism settings. Examples from the PI questionnaire include “I feel that the Hainan Province golf tourism destination is a part of me,” “The Hainan Province golf tourism destination is very special to me,” and “I

identify strongly with the Hainan Province golf tourism destination.” Examples of PD items include “Hainan Province is the best place for what I like to do,” “No other place compares to Hainan Province,” and “Doing what I do at Hainan Province is more important to me than doing it in any other place.” A total of 10 items (5 for PI and 5 for PD) were used.

Revisit intention

Revisit intention (RI) was measured using four items that asked respondents to indicate the probability of returning to the same destination to play golf (Huang & Hsu, 2009). The respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed that they would visit Hainan Province for golf again in the next 2 years. Two of the four items were “I intend to revisit Hainan Province in the next 2 years” and “I plan to revisit Hainan Province in the next 2 years.”

Results

Questionnaire validity and reliability

To shed light on sample distribution and structure, the four sections of the questionnaire included background information about the tourists: gender, age, occupation, education, monthly income, and frequency.

To confirm its validity, two professors and two Ph.D. students in sport and tourism management examined the content and face validity of the questionnaire. The panel assessed the content validity of the items in the questionnaire, and items with inter-rater agreement above .75 (Fleiss, 1981) were kept in the questionnaire. The content validity of the items below .75 inter-rater agreement was further discussed by the panel. As a result, two items showed inter-rater agreement of .50 and after further discussion we reduced the number of place attachment items from 12 to 10. One item for PI (i.e. “Visiting this golf tourism destination says a lot about who I am”) and one item for PD (i.e. “I would enjoy doing the things I do at this golf tourism destination just as much at a similar destination”) were deleted. After pilot testing the remaining items with 30 respondents, items with low factor loading were eliminated (> .05). The final number of items was 22. Of the 240 online survey questionnaires sent to participants, 218 valid questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 90.8%. According to Daniel Soper’s correction of Westland’s statistical arithmetic for calculating minimum sample size, the lower limit for structural equation

Table 2. CFA results for measurement model.

Dimension	Factor loading	Cronbach's α	Construct reliability	Average variance extracted
<i>Destination image (DI)</i>				
<i>Cognitive image (CI)</i>				
(DI1) Hainan Province has a great variety of fauna and flora	0.547	0.820	0.837	0.510
(DI2) There are interesting cultural and historical features in Hainan Province	0.802			
(DI3) Hainan Province has interesting golf activities	0.759			
(DI4) Hainan Province has good night-life	0.693			
(DI5) Hainan Province has appealing local food	0.742			
<i>Affective Image (AI)</i>				
(DI6) Hainan Province is a pleasant place	0.920	0.920	0.908	0.713
(DI7) Hainan Province is a relaxing place	0.915			
(DI8) Hainan Province is an arousing place	0.762			
(DI9) Hainan Province is an exciting place	0.766			
<i>Place Attachment (PA)</i>				
<i>Place Identity (PI)</i>				
(PA1) I feel the Hainan Province golf tourism destination is a part of me	0.712	0.903	0.906	0.660
(PA2) The Hainan Province golf tourism destination is very special to me	0.831			
(PA3) I identify strongly with the Hainan Province golf tourism destination	0.893			
(PA4) I am very attached to the Hainan Province golf tourism destination	0.832			
(PA5) The Hainan Province golf tourism destination means a lot to me	0.802			
<i>Place Dependence (PD)</i>				
(PA6) Hainan Province is the best place for what I like to do	0.822	0.865	0.882	0.607
(PA7) No other place compares to Hainan Province	0.810			
(PA8) I get more satisfaction out of visiting Hainan Province than any other place	0.847			
(PA9) Doing what I do at Hainan Province is more important to me than doing it at any other place	0.855			
(PA10) I wouldn't substitute any other place for doing the types of things I do at Hainan Province	0.502			
<i>Revisit Intention (RI)</i>				
(RI1) I intend to revisit Hainan Province in the next 2 years	0.816	0.902	0.885	0.660
(RI2) I plan to revisit Hainan Province in the next 2 years	0.893			
(RI3) I desire to visit Hainan Province in the next 2 years	0.835			
(RI4) I probably will revisit Hainan Province in the next 2 years	0.693			

modeling (SEM) is 200. Therefore, the present study met the standard (Westland, 2010).

A two-step analysis was used to verify the model (Anderson & Gerbing, 1991). The first stage used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to examine the validity of the measurement model by testing the discrete nature and consistency of five latent variables: CI, AI, PI, PD, and RI.

Characteristics of participants

As shown in Table 1, participants included 82 women (37.6%) and 136 men (62.4%). Most were 20–39 years old (65.5%); the rest were 40–59 years old (22.5%). A large majority (70.2%) had a college-level education; 36.7% had an average monthly income above \$2000, while more than half of the respondents reported an average monthly income below \$2000 (63.3%). More

than half (56.4%) of the participants had golfed in Hainan Province less than two times a year, and 44.6% of the participants visited their respective destinations more than twice annually.

Measurement model

AMOS 18.0 was used to test the psychometric capabilities of the model through CFA and to measure the proposed theoretical model via SEM. No data points were missing, and variables were normally distributed.

The measurement model used maximum likelihood estimation to test the correlation among the 23 items across 5 latent variables: 5 items for CI, 4 items for AI, 5 items for PI, 5 items for PD, and 4 items for RI (see Table 2). CFA was used to measure and improve each factor (Arbuckle, 2010). CFA models are required to have acceptable fit

according to the following: chi-square/degrees of freedom, $\chi^2/df < 3.0$; comparative fit index (CFI) > 0.90 ; incremental fit index (IFI) > 0.90 ; Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) > 0.90 ; and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) < 0.08 (Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008). In the present study, $\chi^2 = 578.112$, $df = 261$, $\chi^2/df = 2.215$, $p < .05$, CFI = 0.920, IFI = 0.921, TLI = 0.908, RMSEA = 0.075, indicating acceptable model fit.

Table 2 displays the Cronbach's alpha values for all observed variables; values exceeding 0.8 indicate high internal consistency (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The convergent validity of the measurement model was tested using factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE). Factor loadings (ranging from 0.502 to 0.920) were significant ($p < .001$) and fell within the suggested threshold values of 0.50 and 0.95 (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016).

Table 2 shows that AVE values ranged from 0.51 to 0.713, which exceed the threshold value of 0.50 for high convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Results show that the construct items accounted for greater than 50% of the variance for each latent factor. In addition, the construct reliability exceeded the threshold value of 0.5. Results meet all thresholds, indicating that the items for each study variable were internally consistent and reliable (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1996). Therefore, all latent variables possessed sufficient reliability.

Table 3 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations for the five constructs. All items were significantly linked to their corresponding latent variables ($p < .001$). The means for each variable ranged from $M = 2.123$ for AI to $M = 2.772$ for PD. Each path coefficient was at least twice the value of its standard error, indicating moderate theoretically consistent correlations for each of the five constructs, as recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1991). These results show that the validity of each construct resulted more from the items measuring the construct than its correlation with other constructs.

Table 3. Measurement correlations for measurement model.

	CI	AI	PI	PD	RI
CI	1	0.551	0.687	0.546	0.503
AI	0.551	1	0.551	0.559	0.572
PI	0.687	0.551	1	0.769	0.665
PD	0.546	0.559	0.769	1	0.665
RI	0.503	0.572	0.665	0.715	1
Mean	2.636	2.123	2.80	2.772	2.603
S.D.	0.877	0.957	0.864	0.790	0.911

Structural model

Once the measurement model was deemed valid and acceptable, the second step was to test the structural model. The second stage utilized SEM to examine the nomological relationships (Alexandris, Funk, & Pritchard, 2011) among the five latent constructs: (a) direct relationships between RI and both PA and DI, (b) direct relationship between DI and PA, and (c) mediating effect of PA in the relationship between DI and RI (see Figure 2).

Testing the structural model involved significance measures for estimated coefficients, providing evidence to support or reject the proposed relationships among the construct variables (Ramseook-Munhurrun, Seebaluck, & Naidoo, 2015). The indicators used to evaluate the measurement model were selected to evaluate how well both the measurement and structural model fit the data: χ^2/df , GFI, AGFI, RMSEA, NFI, and CFI. As shown in Table 4, $\chi^2 = 653.971$, $df = 262$, $\chi^2/df = 2.492$, IFI = 0.905, RMSEA = 0.083, TLI = 0.912, CFI = 0.908. The analysis of fit indicators revealed that the measurement model and structural model provided acceptable fit. Based on the results of the model evaluation process (see Tables 2 and 3), the five latent variables in the measurement model showed strong reliability and validity, and the model had good fit (see Table 4).

The structural model was used to test the hypotheses. The measurement model included 23 observed variables and 5 latent variables (see Table 5). The proposed structural model (see Figure 2) specified the following relationships to examine the eight hypotheses: CI would influence PI, PD, and RI; AI would influence PI, PD, and RI; and PI and PD would influence RI. Five hypotheses were supported, the exceptions being the effect of CI on RI ($\beta = -0.205$, $t = 1.52$), the effect of AI on RI ($\beta = 0.122$, $t = 1.68 < 1.96$), and the effect of PI on RI ($\beta = 0.207$, $t = 1.81 < 1.96$). In structural analysis, t -value indicators, in conjunction with critical ratios, passed the critical value (1.96) at the $p < .01$ level (López-Mosquera & Sánchez, 2012).

The standardized effects of CI positively impacted PI ($\beta = 0.727$, $t = 7.72$) and PD ($\beta = 0.599$, $t = 5.39$). Findings show that when CI was enhanced by one standard deviation, PI was also enhanced by 0.727 standard deviations, and PD was enhanced by a standard deviation of 0.599. AI was positively related to PI ($\beta = 0.219$, $t = 3.37$) and PD ($\beta = 0.256$, $t = 3.18$). This result means

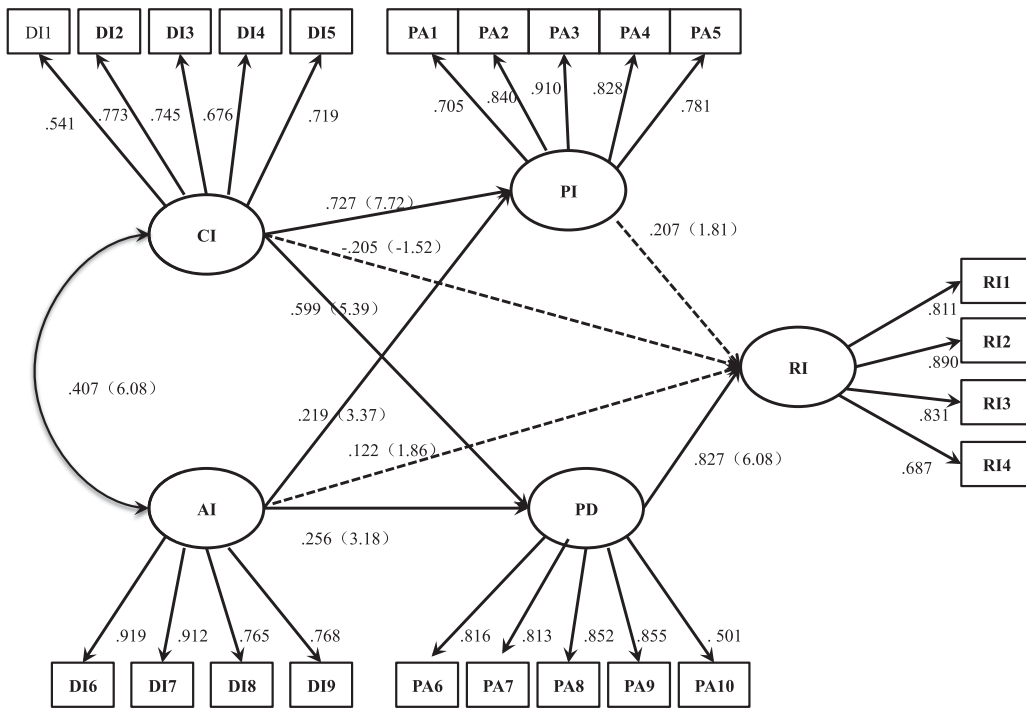


Figure 2. Structural equation model.

that when AI was enhanced by one standard deviation, PI was also enhanced by 0.219 standard deviations, and PD was enhanced by a standard deviation of 0.256. Therefore, H1 was supported.

CI did not have a positive influence on RI ($\beta = -0.205$, $t = -1.52 < 1.96$). The standardized effects of AI did not influence RI ($\beta = 0.122$, $t = 1.86 < 1.96$). Therefore, H2 was not supported.

The standardized effects of PD had a positive impact on RI ($\beta = 0.827$, $t = 6.08$). This finding shows that RI was significantly influenced by PD. However, PI did not have a significant effect on RI ($\beta = 0.207$, $t = 1.81 < 1.96$). This finding implies that PI was not a significant determinant of RI. Therefore, H3 was partially supported.

To determine the relationship between the independent variable (DI) and the dependent variable (RI), the present study used the Sobel test to measure the mediating effects of PA (Sobel, 1982). The mediating effect is considered to be statistically

significant when the Z value is above ± 1.96 ; the larger the value, the greater the mediating effect (Baron & Kenny, 1986). The mediating effect of PA was statistically significant with Z values of 3.936 ($p < .001$) and 3.209 (see Table 6). These results indicate that PD, a sub-factor of PA, mediated the relationship between DI (i.e. both CI and AI) and RI.

Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between DI and PA and to examine the variables that influence RI among golf tourists. This study investigated the mediating variable of PA, addressing a gap in golf tourism destination literature.

The findings indicate a positive relationship between DI and PA, supporting H1. The role of DI as a formative factor that influences PA suggests prior

Table 4. Model fit for structural equation model.

Model	χ^2	Df	p	χ^2/df	IFI	RMSEA	TLI	CFI
Decision	653.971	262	0.00	2.496	0.905	0.083	0.912	0.908
Criteria			$p > .05$	≤ 5	$\geq .90$	$\leq .080$	$\geq .90$	$\geq .90$

Table 5. SEM results for structural model.

Path coefficients between factors	β	T	Hypothesis
Cognitive image --> Place identity	0.727	7.72***	Supported
Cognitive image --> Place dependence	0.599	5.39***	Supported
Affective image --> Place identity	0.219	3.37***	Supported
Affective image --> Place dependence	0.256	3.18**	Supported
Place identity --> Revisit intention	0.207	1.81	Rejected
Place dependence --> Revisit intention	0.827	6.08***	Supported
Affective image --> Revisit intention	0.122	1.68	Rejected
Cognitive image --> Revisit intention	-0.205	-1.52n.s.	Rejected

Note: n.s.

$p > .05$; $*p < .05$; $**p < .01$; $***p < .001$.

experiences and perceptions of a golf destination can determine whether a golf tourist visits that destination (Veasna, Wu, & Huang, 2013). The perceived high quality can increase the RI. Findings of the present study support Hou, Lin, and Morais (2005), who found that DI was an important antecedent variable of PA. Therefore, PA is an important factor in the formation and maintenance of DI.

H2 was not supported by the data. DI had no statistically significant relationship to RI. The standardized coefficient between CI and RI was 1.68 (non-significant), and the standardized coefficient between AI and RI was -1.52 (non-significant). One possible explanation is that in the presence of PA, the direct effect of DI on RI diminished, implying a full mediating effect of PA. To confirm the relationship, we conducted a mediation test and found that PA fully mediated the relationship between DI and RI, a finding that is consistent with Cheng, Wu, and Huang (2013). The implication is that CI and AI had a positive indirect relationship to both PA and RI and that DI affected RI through PA, confirming the findings of Prayag and Ryan (2011).

Finally, H3 was partially supported. Findings show a partial positive relationship between PA and RI. While PI had no significant influence on RI, PD positively impacted RI, affecting the behavioral intention of golf tourists. Previous studies (Lee, Graefe, & Burns, 2007; Prayag & Ryan, 2011) treated PA as an antecedent of RI. PD reflects the effectiveness of a golf

tourism destination in facilitating golfing activities and other functional goals of individuals (Moore & Graefe, 1994). Therefore, PD could be established by the instrumental value of the physical resources available at a destination. In addition, PD can elicit behaviors from individuals (Williams et al., 1992). Higher PD results in greater RI (Moore & Graefe, 1994) among the golf tourists. One plausible reason that PI did not have a significant impact on RI is that PI is more common among permanent residents (Wang, 2015). According to Breakwell (1986), PI is a social product of the interaction between memory, consciousness, and organized construal resulting from distinctiveness, continuity, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Therefore, developing PI might require time and constancy. However, the golf tourists in the present study were visitors from distant provinces in China who had visited once or twice in the past and stayed only a short time.

Our findings suggest that the DI model for Hainan Province, China is valid and RI among golf tourists is directly affected by DI and PA, which is also indirectly affected by DI.

Conclusions and implications

The present study contributes to the theoretical understanding of golf tourism. Most of the previous golf tourism studies focused on the segmentation characteristics of golf tourists (e.g. Hennessey et al., 2008; Petrick, 2002) and only a few examined tourist behavior in relation to DI (e.g. Geissler, 2005; Humphreys, 2014; Hutchinson et al., 2010). However, no study has applied DI to the Chinese golf tourism context. The present study (a) established the construct validity of and the reliability of measures for DI, PA, and RI in this context and (b) extended the decision-making framework of golf tourists by adding PA to the model. Although PA theory has been well conceptualized in general tourism research, the present study was the first to extend the theory to Chinese golf tourism in order to explain the role of DI in the decision to revisit a destination. The relationship between PA and RI, as well as between DI and RI, accounts for part of this relationship. A positive DI created by a prior visit might increase PA (Cheng et al., 2013), potentially leading to repeat visits and increasing loyalty to a destination (Lee, 2001).

Compared to other Chinese golf tourism destinations, Hainan Province has the largest golf courses and a unique culture. Golf tourists, therefore, seem

Table 6. Sobel test of mediating effect of place attachment.

Path	a	Sa	B	Sb	Z
CI --> PD --> RI	0.599	0.082	0.827	0.177	3.936 ($p < .001$)
AI --> PD --> RI	0.256	0.058	0.827	0.177	3.209 ($p < .01$)

willing to revisit this destination. Tourism managers should use these attractive features to promote PA. First, administrators of Hainan Province golf tourism should strengthen DI by increasing the attractiveness of its various destinations. Furthermore, the local government should make quality documentaries and launch advertising campaigns about famous sites to highlight valuable core attributes. Second, Hainan Province should upgrade accommodations and food quality and improving transportation convenience. Through WOM and promotions, tourists can gain a profound impression of the various golfing destinations within Hainan Province and enhance attachment to those destinations in order to increase their intention to revisit.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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