



## FESTIVAL ATTACHMENT A NEW PERSPECTIVE TO UNDERSTAND THE TOURISTS' FESTIVALS RELATIONSHIP

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### ABSTRACT

A relatively new construct describing the tourist-festival bond, named "festival attachment," is derived from research on place attachment. This article aims to review the literature on different constructs for understanding the tourist-festival bond and place attachment studies in the tourism discipline, summarise additional findings, and propose the concept of "festival attachment." Building on previous conceptualisations of place attachment, this study considers festival attachment as the people-place relationship arising from tourists' on-site experience at a festival. That is, the formation of festival attachment presumes the visitors' on-site experiences and perceptions of a festival. This new construct of the people-festival bond can be used to understand more complex, longer relationships between individuals (festival tourists, festival participants, festival performers, festival volunteers, and festival residents) Festivals, and the different dimensions can be further applied to provide insights for brand strategy development. This study highlights the importance of festival attachment as an essential construct, explaining the connections between festivals and their tourists. In addition, the study adds new

### المخلص

هناك بناء جديد نسبيًا يصف الارتباط السياحي بالمهرجان، يسمى "ارتباط المهرجان"، مستمد من بحث حول الارتباط بالمكان. تهدف هذه المقالة إلى مراجعة الأدبيات المتعلقة بالبنى المختلفة لفهم الرابطة السياحية والمهرجانية ودراسة الارتباط المكاني في مجال السياحة، وتلخيص النتائج الإضافية، واقتراح مفهوم "ارتباط المهرجان". بناءً على المفاهيم السابقة للارتباط بالمكان. تعتبر هذه الدراسة الارتباط بالمهرجان علي انه العلاقة بين الناس والمكان الناشئة عن تجربة السائح في الموقع في المهرجان. أي أن تشكيل ملحق المهرجان يفترض تجارب وتصورات الزوار في الموقع حول المهرجان. يمكن استخدام هذا البناء الجديد للرابطة بين الناس والمهرجانات لفهم العلاقات الأكثر تعقيدًا والأطول بين الأفراد (سائحي المهرجانات، والمشاركين في المهرجانات، وفناني المهرجانات، ومتطوعي المهرجانات، والمقيمين في المهرجانات). ويمكن تطبيق المهرجانات، والأبعاد المختلفة بشكل أكبر لتوفير رؤى لتطوير استراتيجية العلامة التجارية. تسلط هذه الدراسة الضوء على أهمية الارتباط بالمهرجانات باعتباره بناءً أساسيًا، موضحة الروابط بين المهرجانات وسياحها. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تضيف الدراسة معرفة جديدة إلى الدراسات الحالية المتعلقة بسندات المهرجانات السياحية.

knowledge to existing studies concerning tourist-festival bonds.

## KEYWORDS

Festival attachment, place attachment, tourists' behavior.

## الكلمات الدالة

الارتباط بالمهرجان، الارتباط بالمكان، سلوك السائح

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Festivals, along with sports, and business events, are among the general types of events that have drawn the greatest interest from researchers and practitioners (Getz, 2008). Festivals play a significant role in the tourism industry. They attract tourists to specific destinations and contribute to destination image formation and marketing. They also facilitate the revitalisation of tourist attractions and destinations and catalyze various forms of development, such as economic and regional development, urban development and renewal, and social capital development (Getz, 2010).

(Fu, Yi, Okumus, & Jin, 2019) Studying tourists' behavior when attending festivals is an ongoing research area (e.g., Kim and Chang 2020; Lee and Kwon 2021; Tsaur et al. 2019). Tourist behavior should be properly, reliably, and continuously observed, given that tourists are a valuable source of information for an effective long-term tourism business (Juvan, Omerzel, & Maravić, 2017). Identifying festival tourists' behaviour enables festival organisers to develop efficient marketing strategies to ensure long-term economic viability in an increasingly competitive marketplace (Kruger & Saayman, 2017). Cohen, Prayag, and Moital (2014) found that decision-making, values, motivations, self-concept and personality, expectations, attitudes, perceptions, satisfaction, trust, and loyalty are key terms of tourist behaviour. Attachment is another concept that attracts researchers' attention to investigating and understanding festival tourists' experiences and behaviours (e.g., Kim et al. 2019; Lee, Kyle, and Scott 2012; Tsaur et al. 2019).

There are possibly several different ways to describe and interpret the psychological connections between tourists and a festival based on different research concepts: commitment (Kim, Scott, & Crompton, 1997) (e.g., J. Lee 2014; Kim, Scott, and Crompton 1997; Tanford, Montgomery, and Hertzman 2012) and attachment (e.g., Tsaur et al. 2019). This is important because emerging research suggests that the tourist-entity bond can evoke strong emotions that would influence an individual's behavior, such as loyalty and behavioral intentions. Thus, attachment is the most commonly used concept to understand these relationships between tourists and various tourism environments (Dwyer, Chen, and Lee 2019).

The concept of "place attachment" has been conceptualised and studied widely by researchers in different fields, including tourism, to understand how tourists relate to specific environments such as destinations and events (Jeong, Kim, & Yu, 2019) (Yi, Fu, Jin, & Okumus, 2018) (Yuksel, Yuksel, & Bilim, 2010) (e.g., Lee, Kyle, and Scott 2012; Jeong, Kim, and 2019; Yi et al., 2018; Yuksel, Yuksel, and Bilim 2010). Fu (2019) and Yi et al. (2018) stated that the concept of place attachment is not restricted to geographic boundaries but can be extended to a wide range of organisational and relational settings, including communities and neighborhoods, countries, cities, events, festivals, and even historical and imagined locations. As a result, place attachment has recently been used as the basis for the conceptualisation of many attachment-based concepts in different contexts, including a technology attachment (e.g., Wu and Cheng 2018), restaurant attachment (e.g., H-C. Wu et al., 2019), virtual reality attachment (Wu, Ai, & Cheng, 2020) (e.g., Wu, Ai, and Cheng, 2020), security attachment (attachment

to secure destinations) (e.g., Wu and Chang 2020), exhibition attachment (e.g., Yi et al. 2018), and festival attachment (e.g., Alonso-Vazquez et al. 2019). However, using the concept of place attachment in festival settings to study and understand tourist-festival relations is a new research direction, with little research on the subject to date. Accordingly, this research aims to review the literature on different constructs for understanding the tourist-festival bond and reviewing place attachment studies in the tourism discipline, summarise additional findings, and propose the concept of festival attachment.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 FESTIVAL ATTACHMENT

Attachment to festivals, or festival attachment, is an important factor in tourists' decision-making to visit a particular festival (Kim et al. 2019). It can be formed when the tourists' needs are met and satisfied through experiencing various aspects of the festival environment (Tsaour et al. 2019). According to researchers, a high level of tourists' attachment towards a particular festival leads to a strong sense of identification with the festival in accordance with their self-image, a strong desire to return to the festival to maximise psychological benefits and minimise economic costs, and a solid resistance to substituting the setting for another (Lee and Kyle 2014); as well as increasing positive word-of-mouth for other tourists who share the same interests (Alonso-Vazquez 2016). In the present study, the researchers conducted an extensive review of the previous research that studied the concept of festival attachment (see Table 1).

Table 1: Studies on festival attachment concept

|    | <b>Author/s and Year</b>                          | <b>Research Title</b>   | <b>Definitions of Festival Attachment</b>  |
|----|---|---|--|
| 1- | Kim and Zhu (2021)                                | The impacts of positive festival memory on traveler's experience sharing: an online friendship moderation model / Guangdong Province-South China    | "The emotional bond to the festival" (p. 178).   |
| 2- | Jeon (2020)                                       | The impact of festival experiential attributes on millennial visitors' happiness, festival attachment, and loyalty / Korea                          | "The emotional bond that festival visitors have towards a particular festival brand" (p. 126).                   |
| 3- | Larasati and Balqiah (2020).                      | Japanese Cultural Festival Behavioral Intention Based on Attendees' Co-Creation, Perceived Value, And Satisfaction.                                 | _____  |
| 4- | Alonso-Vazquez, Packer, Fairley and Hughes (2019) | The role of place attachment and festival attachment in influencing attendees' environmentally responsible behaviors at music festivals / Australia | "The emotional bond that event attendees have towards a particular festival" (p. 3).                             |
| 5- | Kim, Lee, Kim, and Petrick (2019)                 | Wellness pursuit and slow life-seeking behaviors: the moderating role of festival attachment / Korea  | "Festival visitors' perceived importance, value, self-concept, symbols, and functions toward a festival" (p. 6). |
| 6- | Quillian (2019)                                   | Residents' and tourists' motivations, attachment, and perceived impacts at U.S. festivals: a national panel study / USA                             | _____  |
| 7- | Tsaour, Wang, and Liu (2019)                      | Festival attachment: antecedents and effects on place attachment and place loyalty  | "The relationship between a tourist and festival, which is established through experiencing                      |

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the festival's functional knowledge, emotional linkage and symbolic expression" (p. 19).

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As shown in the table above, festival attachment emerges as a new concept that attracts more recent research efforts to understand the relationships between festivals and their tourists. This supports researchers' claims that festival attachment is a new concept and that knowledge about it is still limited in festival marketing (Quillian 2019; Tsaur et al. 2019). Hence, festival attachment is a concept under researched and only recently conceived with limited academic research efforts.

## 2.2 PLACE ATTACHMENT

Place attachment is a concept that has developed in environmental psychology to understand the relationship between people and their environments or places (Dwyer, Chen, and Lee 2019; Yi et al. 2018). It is conceptualised as "a positive connection or bond between a person and a particular place" (Williams and Vaske 2003, p. 831). The word "place" indicates an environmental setting, while the word "attachment" indicates an affection or emotion (Low and Altman 1992). Although affections are considered the fundamental components of place attachment, they are primarily accompanied by cognitive (thought, knowledge, and belief) and behavioral components (Low and Altman 1992).

There has been substantial interest in the concept of place attachment in tourism-related research concerning the nature of the people-place relationship (Dwyer, Chen, and Lee, 2019). From the perspective of tourism marketing, place attachment is an important term that reflects the multi-faceted nature of the meanings that tourists and residents assign to physical environments (Dwyer, Chen, and Lee 2019). This concept has become an important concept that has been used by researchers to understand tourists' behavior towards a destination, event, or festival (Alonso-Vazquez et al. 2019; Lee, Kyle, and Scott 2012; Yi et al. 2018; Yuksel, Yuksel, and Bilim 2010). It is defined as a positive personal bond created between the tourists and a tourist place as a result of the tourist's appreciating and valuing that place and taking a genuine interest in it (Nasir, Mohamad, Ghani, & Afthanorhan, 2020) (Nasir et al. 2020). It was also defined as a set of functional, cognitive, and emotional bonds formed between tourists and a destination (Halpenny, 2010; Kil et al., 2012; Yuksel, Yuksel, and Bilim, 2010). Social bonding was recently added to the definition of place attachment. It was studied as another component of place attachment that can be formed between tourists and the visited place, as it represents a key source that gives meaning to the site (Kyle, Mowen, and Tarrant, 2004; Lee, Kyle, and Scott, 2012). Place attachment has been more recently studied in the context of event and festival tourism to investigate the perspective of event or festival tourists on the bonds created towards the event or festival host place (e.g., Brown, Smith, and Assaker 2016; Jeong, Kim, and Yu 2019; Lee, Kyle, and Scott 2012; Su et al. 2018), and between the tourists and the event or festival itself (e.g., Alonso-Vazquez et al. 2019; Fu 2019).

## 2.3 FROM PLACE ATTACHMENT TO FESTIVAL ATTACHMENT

Place attachment is not restricted to territorial or geographical boundaries like destinations. It can also be applied to a variety of organisational and relational settings, such as communities, countries, cities, historical places, and events and festivals (Fu 2019; Fu et al. 2019), all of which focus on the emotional bonds resulting from an interaction between people and a specific setting (Fu et al. 2019). In response, place attachment has served as a fundamental concept in different contexts from where other

ideas were borrowed, so that indicates bonds formed between people (i.e., tourists and customers) and entities, such as technology attachment, restaurant attachment, virtual reality attachment, security attachment (attachment to secure destinations), exhibition attachment, brand attachment, and festival attachment (see Table 2). For example, Yi et al. (2018) proposed the concept of "exhibition attachment" based on the idea of "place attachment" to study the bonds formed between an exhibition and its tourists. The authors confirmed the role of exhibition attachment as an essential link in understanding exhibition tourists' behaviour and decision-making processes.

Table 2: Studies on tourist-entity relationships and customer-entity relationships based on the concept of place attachment.

|     | Author/s and Year                                  | Research Title   | Construct                  |
|-----|--|--|----------------------------|
| 1-  | Alonso-Vazquez, Packer, Fairley, and Hughes (2019) | The role of place attachment and festival attachment in influencing attendees' environmentally responsible behaviours at music festivals                                   | Festival attachment        |
| 2-  | Wu and Chang (2020)                                | <u>Relationships between secure attachment, experiential co-creation and future experiential intentions in the tourism industry: The case of COVID-19</u>                  | Secure attachment          |
| 3-  | Wu and Cheng (2018)                                | Relationships between technology attachment, experiential relationship quality, experiential risk and experiential sharing intentions in a smart hotel                     | Technology attachment      |
| 4-  | Fu (2019)  | An experience-attachment-loyalty model for exhibition attendees: the mediation effect of exhibition attachment   | Exhibition attachment      |
| 5-  | Fu, Yi, Okumus, and Jin (2019)                     | Linking the internal mechanism of exhibition attachment to exhibition satisfaction: A comparison of first-time and repeat attendees  | Exhibition attachment      |
| 6-  | Wu, Ai, and Cheng (2020)                           | Virtual reality experiences, attachment and experiential outcomes in tourism   | Virtual reality attachment |
| 7-  | Wu and Cheng (2019)                                | Relationships between restaurant attachment, experiential relationship quality and experiential relationship intentions: The case of single friendly restaurants in Taiwan | Restaurant attachment      |
| 8-  | Yi, Fu, Jin, and Okumus (2018)                     | Constructing a model of an exhibition attachment: Motivation, attachment, and loyalty  | Exhibition attachment      |
| 9-  | Kim, Choe, and Petrick (2018)                      | The effect of celebrity on brand awareness, perceived quality, brand image, brand loyalty, and destination attachment to a literary festival                               | Destination attachment     |
| 10- | Yuksel, Yuksel, and Bilim (2010)                   | Destination attachment: effects on customer satisfaction and cognitive, affective and conative loyalty   | Destination attachment     |
| 11- | Chen (2012)  | Conceptualising the dimensionality of brand attachment: to understand the long-term complex human-brand relationship from an attachment perspective                        | Brand attachment           |

Festivals can be synonymous with a particular place (Wise and Harris 2019). Places represent environmental settings to which humans are emotionally and culturally attached (Low and Altman, 1992). Festivals, similar to places, exist in relation to their environments where tourists become emotionally and culturally attached (Getz, 2010; Tanford, Montgomery, and Hertzman, 2012; Lee, Lee, and Arcodia, 2014). Festivals are also seen as places where tourists strengthen social bonds, enhance their identities, and then shape their attachment to them (Alonso-Vazquez 2016). In addition, festivals are characterised by Anderton (2018) as "cyclic places," a concept that acknowledges how festivals may come to be constructed as places that hold significant social and cultural

meanings for their tourists. Thus, the present study argues that festivals serve as places where festival experiences occur and tourists become emotionally and culturally attached.

### 3. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study argues that festival attachment can be formed between tourists and a particular festival in the same way that place attachment can develop between tourists and a specific place. Taking into consideration that interaction between tourists and a festival or place environment (where tourists' experiences take place) is a prerequisite for such attachment to form. In other words, when tourists interact with festival environments (physical and social), their desires and needs are more likely to be met and satisfied, and tourists will likely benefit or value from their interactions. If tourists' desires and needs are fulfilled, and values are gained from their interaction, they will form bonds. Then, tourists become attached to festivals (Tsaur et al. 2019; Cheon 2016).

In the meantime, building on previous conceptualisations of place attachment (Brown, Smith, and Assaker 2016; Yuksel, Yuksel, and Bilim 2010), this study considers festival attachment as the people-place relationship arising from tourists' on-site experience at a festival. That is, the formation of festival attachment presumes the visitors' on-site experiences and perceptions of a festival. Consequently, "festival attachment" in the current study is defined as the bonds between festival tourists and the festival itself, resulting from on-site experience and attributable to the interaction between the visitors and the festival environment (Fu 2019; Yi et al. 2018). These bonds are functional, emotional, cognitive, and social (Halppeny 2010; Kil et al. 2012; Kyle, Mowen, and Tarrant 2004; Yuksel, Yuksel, and Bilim 2010).

This research is one of the first studies to introduce the concept of place attachment to tourism research and propose the idea of festival attachment. The "festival attachment" concept has recently been undertaken with a lack of academic research efforts and is still under-researched. The study highlights the importance of festival attachment as an essential construct, explaining the connections between festivals and their tourists. This study adds new knowledge to existing studies concerning studying tourist-festival bonds. This also extends the scope of place attachment literature with important insights from the festival settings. It is worth noting that the festival attachment concept is not restricted to studying and understanding the tourist-festival bonds but also includes understanding the bonds between festivals and their participants, performers, residents, and volunteers. Future researchers are encouraged to study festival attachment in more detail to understand how tourists' attachment to festivals develops and what contributes to their attachment. Research should also examine potential behavioral antecedents and outcomes of festival attachment.

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