Article

How Does Tourist Experience Affect Environmentally Responsible Behavior?

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Abstract: Mountain tourism is an important part of China's tourism market. Tourist behavior is essential to environmental protection and the sustainability of destinations. This paper takes environmentally responsible behavior (ERB) as an important tourist behavior. It breaks down the dimensions of the traditional tourism experience, such as hedonism, participation, novelty; or hedonism, involvement, novelty, local culture; and analyzes the influence of entertainment, education, aesthetics, and escape on place attachment from the nature of the tourism experience. It then incorporates nature bonding into the system of place attachment and analyzes the relationship with place attachment, tourist experiences, and ERBs in Qianshan Mountain, a 5A scenic spot in China. Partial least squares structural (PLS) equation modeling is used to analyze the data of 410 valid questionnaires. The results found that tourist experiences affect ERBs through place attachment. Nature bonding is the key factor of ERBs. The results are as follows: escape and aesthetics influence ERB through nature bonding; entertainment influences general ERB through place identity and nature bonding; education has a positive impact on general ERB through place identity and place dependence. Entertainment and education experiences partially affect place attachment. Place identity and nature bonding affect general ERB, but particular ERB is related only to nature bonding. The internal psychological mechanism of ERB is identified. In addition, mountain landscapes can be designed from the perspective of entertainment experiences, landscape aesthetic, leisure atmosphere and educational functions, so that tourists can spontaneously pay attention to environmental issues and engage in the practical activities of environmental protection.

Keywords: tourist experience; place attachment; environmentally responsible behavior; Qianshan Mountain

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1. Introduction

Mountain tourism has been popular since the 19th century [1,2]. China is rich in mountain resources. Most of the world natural and cultural heritages are mountain tourism resources in China [3]. More than two billion people participate in mountain tourism in China every year, accounting for approximately 20 percent of the entire tourism market [4]. Therefore, mountain tourism occupies a central position in China's tourism market. However, most vulnerable mountain ecosystems are located in remote and poor areas with limited policy support and supervision capabilities [5]. In these areas, tourists' choosing, buying, consuming, and discarding tourism products and services cannot be regulated [6–8]; and local residents often pay more attention to economic benefits than to the protection of the mountain ecosystem, thus contributing to its degradation [9,10].

To protect and conserve mountain tourism resources, environmentalist and tourism marketers try to improve tourists' ERB. ERB consists of behaviors that reflect the tourists' concern for the natural environment and for environmental problems [11–13]. It includes

leaving local flora and fauna intact [14,15], conserving materials and energy [16], recycling [17], avoiding the discharge of pollutants [18,19], and traffic control [20,21] in mountain ecosystems. Many scholars have explored these proactive factors in order to identify the mechanisms of ERB such as emotion [22,23], regulation [24,25], perceived value [26], and visitor participation and experience [27,28]. It was found that there were very few mandatory environmental regulations. In addition, tourists' internal psychological and emotional factors have an important impact on ERB [29–31]. Lee and Jan [32] considered that tourists' experience would be related to their ERBs; and built a model of recreation experience, environmental value, environmental attitude, and ERB. Cheng and Wu [33] constructed a framework of environmental knowledge, environmental sensitivity, place attachment, and ERB. They identified that the influence of place attachment is a mediating factor on ERB. Su et al. [25] constructed a model of eco-friendly reputation, emotional experience, and ERB, and identified that the eco-friendly reputation of a tourist destination and the emotional experience of tourists resulted in the formation of ERB. Zhou et al. [34] believed that the generation of ERB was a process of self-awareness. They found that tourist participation could directly generate ERB through the effect of relationship between the visitor and the destination quality. Confente and Scarpi [35] stated that the recognition of environmental consequences had an impact on ERB and verified that place attachment had an important moderating effect on ERB.

Previous studies have shown that ERB are affected by tourists' environmental attitudes. A pleasant trip often changes tourist behavior by associating positive ERB with the tourists' cognition and emotions. Therefore, enjoyable travel experiences will spontaneously generate ERBs. However, as a subjective psychological state, tourist experience is a multi-dimensional, comprehensive concept that consists of behavior, relationship, emotion, and cognition [36,37]. It leads to place attachment to the destination through behavior involvement [38–40]. If tourists experience place attachment to the destination, they focus on local environmental protection or environmental issues [23,41]. People who have place dependence and place identity support ERBs with action [42,43]. It is worth mentioning that nature bonding is an important concept relating to tourists' ERBs. This emotional connection between people and nature is an important part of place attachment in the sense of place [44,45]. Tourists come to understand and improve their understanding of the relationship between nature and people, which leads to ERBs [35,46]. However, previous studies have focused on the relationship between tourist experience or place attachment and ERB [43,47], and included little research about how tourist experience with place attachment affects ERB. Place attachment consists of two dimensions of place identity and place dependence [48,49]. This consideration of the emotional connection between people and nature, which is essential for tourists to demonstrate ERBs [50,51]. Therefore, this paper focuses on the fragile mountain ecosystem. It introduces the concept of place attachment and the ways in which tourists perform ERBs spontaneously in the psychological and emotional response to the human–land relationship, through the tourist experience. The tourism experience is divided into entertainment, education, aesthetics, and escape. To highlight the relationship between humans and nature, this paper breaks down the traditional two-dimensional place attachment framework, and factors nature bonding into the dimension of place attachment. It explains how different types of tourism experiences affect ERBs through place attachment, from the perspective of the emotional connection between humans and nature.

2. Literature Review and Model Development

2.1. Tourist Experience

Tourism is a multidimensional interaction between humans and the environment [52]. Tourist activities such as visits, entertainment, learning, and enjoyment [53], are both physical and psychological experiences [54]. Tourists strengthen their relationship with a destination and generate positive emotions with, and attachment to, the destination through behavioral participation and interaction [55]. Tourist experiences generate pleasure

states which form different dimensions [56]. Pine and Gilmore [38] and Oh et al. [53] divided the tourist experience into four dimensions of entertainment, education, aesthetics, and escape. Kim et al. [56] suggested that seven dimensions characterized a memorable tourism experience: hedonism, involvement, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, knowledge, and novelty. Tsai and Simon [57] categorized tourist experience in terms of hedonism, involvement, novelty, meaningfulness, refreshment, knowledge, and education. Gu et al. [58] identified seven dimensions: local culture, natural environments, natural landscapes, self-realization, social participation, consumption, relaxation, and recreation. This paper draws on the four dimensions of Pine and Gilmore [38] and Oh et al. [53]. These dimensions encompass the physical and mental components of tourist experiences, are consistent with mountain tourism [59], and are easy to evaluate in practice.

2.2. Place Attachment

Place attachment is part of environmental psychology and is defined as a positive emotional connection between a person and an environment. It also describes tourists' feelings about a destination. Researchers have defined place attachment in terms of sense of place and community attachment. Williams and Vaske [48] measured people's feelings about a place in relation to place dependence and place identity. Raymond et al. [44] subdivided place attachment into place identity, place dependence, nature bonding, and social bonding. Kaltenborn and Bjørn [60] reported that place attachment consisted of natural and cultural attachment. Dutcher et al. [45] proposed two dimensions of community attachment: social and natural environment. This paper divides place attachment into place identity, nature bonding, and place dependence. This is because the traditional dimensions of place attachment that consist of place dependence and place identity tends to ignore the importance of the natural environment and interpersonal social bonding [44]. In the four-dimensional view of place attachment, social bonding is often used to describe the sense of belonging and emotional connection among groups in a community environment [61]. Nature bonding is a connection to the natural environment based on historical, emotional, or cognitive experiences [44]. The mountains have an excellent natural and ecological environment. As a dimension of place attachment, nature bonding is important to consider in relation to mountain tourism.

2.3. Tourist Experience and Place Attachment

The generation of place attachment depends on tourist participation and their understanding of the destination [57,62,63]. Interesting and impressive experiences can arouse place attachment [52,64,65]. The satisfaction of tourists with a variety of tourism experiences will deepen their emotional connection to the natural environment, and this connection will shape the place identity and nature bonding [66,67]. Unforgettable memories can also improve tourists' place identity or place dependence, confirming that "enjoying the natural environment" has a significant positive effect on place attachment [57,68–70]. Korpela et al. [71] also found that tourists liked to go to specific places for a pleasant experience. The aesthetic experience allows tourists to immerse themselves in nature at a destination [72]. Oh et al. [53] found that it was easy to generate tourist attachment to a destination in aesthetic experience. In rural tourism, a positive aesthetic experience strengthens place attachment for tourists [73]. Escape experience needs deeper immersion and more participation for tourists; however, they usually spend more time traveling to activities, so it is easier for them to establish place identity [74–76]. Tourists' emotional connection with a place is strengthened when they are in a place that is conducive to physical relaxation and spiritual recovery [77]. The knowledge of a destination's history, nature, and culture can promote place identity for tourists [77]. In addition, knowledge sharing behaviors of tourists can promote place attachment by increasing their participation at the destination [78]. Educating tourists on environmental protection can help them build an emotional and spiritual connection to the destination; and this connection is key to place attachment [79]. This leads to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis I. *Tourist experience positively influences place attachment.*

Hypothesis 1. *Entertainment experience positively influences place attachment.*

Hypothesis 1a. *Entertainment experience positively influences place identity.*

Hypothesis 1b. *Entertainment experience positively influences nature bonding.*

Hypothesis 1c. *Entertainment experience positively influences place dependence.*

Hypothesis 2. *Aesthetic experience positively influences place attachment.*

Hypothesis 2a. *Aesthetic experience positively influences place identity.*

Hypothesis 2b. *Aesthetic experience positively influences nature bonding.*

Hypothesis 2c. *Aesthetic experience positively influences place dependence.*

Hypothesis 3. *Escapism experience positively influences place attachment.*

Hypothesis 3a. *Escapism experience positively influences place identity.*

Hypothesis 3b. *Escapism experience positively influences nature bonding.*

Hypothesis 3c. *Escapism experience positively influences place dependence.*

Hypothesis 4. *Education experience positively influences place attachment.*

Hypothesis 4a. *Education experience positively influences place identity.*

Hypothesis 4b. *Education experience positively influences nature bonding.*

Hypothesis 4c. *Education experience positively influences place dependence.*

2.4. Environmentally Responsible Behavior

ERB consists of energy conservation, waste avoidance, recycling, green mobility and transportation, green consumerism, and environmentally friendly social behaviors [17]. Smith-Sebasto and D'Costa [80] suggested dividing ERB into civic, educational, financial, legal, physical, and persuasion actions. Stern [81] proposed that ERB is classified into environmental activism, non-activist behaviors in the public sphere, private-sphere environmentalism, and other environmentally significant behaviors. Other researchers hold that ERB should be divided into general ERB and particular ERB [36,82]. General ERB includes everyday practices, such as disposing of garbage [83]. Particular ERB is specific to an environment, such as a tourism destination [23,84]. This two-dimensional view of ERB has been widely recognized [85,86].

Baker and Crompton [59] have reported that if tourists are highly satisfied with their trip, they will be in a good psychological state that is conducive to positive tourism behaviors. Tourists will generate positive “human-to-land” emotions by interacting with the destinations and the natural environment. In the process, tourists emulate and learn environmental attitudes and behaviors [25]. In other words, tourists can experience place attachment through enhanced emotional connection and sense of belonging during their travel experiences. Tourists with deep place attachment will be more receptive to ERB and more protective of the environment [35]. Therefore, researchers believe that tourists are more likely to adopt pro-environment behaviors when they have a strong emotional connection to the destination [87,88].

2.5. Place Attachment and ERB

Previous studies have shown that place attachment affects ERB [45,86]. Cheng and Wu [33] found that individuals with a strong attachment to a place showed positive ERBs. Walker and Chapman [86] identified that tourists with place attachment would pick up other people's litter in a park. Ramkissoon et al. [83] and Tonge et al. [84] reported that interactive participation or emotional connection in a tourism experience had an impact on tourist ERB. Tourists with stronger place identity were more likely to be critical of behaviors that destroy the natural environment [89], a response that is related to their cognition and emotions. When tourists have special emotions about a destination, they tend to care about local environmental issues [90,91]. The positive memory formed in the tourism experience also affects place identity through cognition and emotion, leading to positive ERBs [87,88]. Stedman [92] found a significant positive correlation between place identity and willingness to take part in ERBs. Nature bonding gives tourists a sense of place attachment in a natural environment and promotes pro-environmental behaviors [28,90]. Place dependence influences tourists' ERBs by meeting tourists' functional needs in the destination and positive emotions are generated by the relationship [34]. Place attachment has direct and indirect effects on ERB [23,91]. This leads to the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis II. *Place attachment positively influences ERB.*

Hypothesis 5. *Place identity positively influences ERB.*

Hypothesis 5a. *Place identity positively influences general ERB.*

Hypothesis 5b. *Place identity positively influences particular ERB.*

Hypothesis 6. *Nature bonding positively influences ERB.*

Hypothesis 6a. *Nature bonding positively influences general ERB.*

Hypothesis 6b. *Nature bonding positively influences particular ERB.*

Hypothesis 7. *Place dependence positively influences ERB.*

Hypothesis 7a. *Place dependence positively influences general ERB.*

Hypothesis 7b. *Place dependence positively influences particular ERB.*

3. Research Methods and Model Testing

3.1. Questionnaire Design and Data Collection

3.1.1. Questionnaire Design

The data were collected with a questionnaire survey, and a structural equation model was used to test the hypotheses. To improve credibility and reliability, all variables were measured based on scales used in the literature; these were especially suitable for this study. For the Qianshan scenic spot, we consulted experts and staff to revise the questionnaire, and after the preliminary investigation and scale test, a formal scale was created. Oh et al.'s [53] four-part tourist experience model was adopted: entertainment, aesthetics, escape, and education. The items of place attachment were drawn from Raymond and Brown [44], and included four questions about place identity, four questions about nature bonding, and three questions about place dependence. The scale was based on findings regarding the measurement of general and particular ERB by Smith-Sebasto and D'Costa's [80] and Cheng et al. [86].

The subjects in this paper were Chinese tourists. To ensure the consistency of the content and expression in translation, we invited Chinese scholars and the managers of the scenic spot to review and revise the questionnaire, and native English speakers to review and correct the content. In addition, we conducted a reading test on the items with social personnel to ensure that there were no semantic errors or ambiguities in translation. We then composed the formal questionnaire.

The final questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part measured tourist experience, place attachment and ERB (1 = completely disagree, 7 = completely agree). The respondents were asked to express their degree of agreement with each measurement item on a 7-point Likert scale. The second part of the questionnaire collected the respondent's demographic information (gender, age, monthly income, education level, occupation) and the number of times they had been to Qianshan Mountain.

3.1.2. Questionnaire Distribution and Data Collection

Qianshan Mountain is located in the central part of Liaoning Province in northeast China [123°4' E, 40° N]. It is a national 5A level scenic spot and a branch of the Changbai Mountains. Qianshan Mountain is at least 3.8 billion years old. This mountain resort with its temples and gardens is also famous for its stone pines, natural scenery, and historical sites. Qianshan Mountain's landforms and vegetation are valued for tourism and for scientific research.

To ensure that the respondents visited most of the scenic spots, the questionnaires were randomly distributed one-to-one at the exit of each of the scenic spots and the rest areas of Qianshan Mountain, 4–7 October 2019. The survey adhered to the principles of voluntary participation and anonymity for the protection of tourist privacy. A total of 540 questionnaires were distributed, and 525 copies were returned. Of these, 410 were valid, for an effective return rate of 75.9%. Table 1 shows the demographic information of the 410 respondents. The result shows that women (56.1%) outnumbered men (43.9%), and 61.7% of tourists had attended university or earned a bachelor's degree. The sample accurately reflected the demographic characteristics of the tourists. The data from the 410 questionnaires was used for the structural equation analysis.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Participants ($n = 410$).

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	180	43.9
	Female	230	56.1
Age	18 and under	40	9.8
	19–25	72	17.6
	26–30	88	21.5
	31–40	86	21.0
	41–50	54	13.2
	51–60	38	9.3
	Over 60	32	7.8
	Under 3000	102	24.9
Monthly income (RMB)	3001–5000	188	45.9
	5001–7000	92	22.4
	7001–10,000	13	3.2
	Above 10,000	15	3.7
Education Level	Junior middle school and below	58	14.1
	Senior high school and vocational high school	71	17.3
	Junior college	99	24.1
	Undergraduate	154	37.6
	Master's degree or above	28	6.8
Occupation	Students	75	18.3

Table 1. Cont.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Travel frequency	Civil servant	48	11.7
	Personnel of enterprises and institutions	99	24.1
	Individual business operators	55	13.4
	Freelance	45	11.0
	Retiree	46	11.2
	Others	42	10.2
	Once a year	63	15.4
	2–3 times each year	265	64.6
	4–5 times each year	70	17.1
	More than 5 times a year	12	2.9
Times of visit	First time	272	66.3
	Second time	89	21.7
	Third time	16	3.9
Qianshan Mountain	Fourth or more time	33	8.0
	1 day or less	332	81.0
	2–3 days	70	17.1
Number of days in Qianshan Mountain	More than 3 days	8	2.0

3.2. Results

3.2.1. Measurement Model

The Partial Least Square (PLS) method was used to analyze the relationship among latent variables. The main reason was that PLS-SEM is suitable for predictive research [93] and can test the robustness of a model [94]. PLS-SEM does not require the measured variable data to comply with the normal distribution and thus does not overemphasize the nonlinear effect [95]. It was therefore suitable for this study.

The evaluation indexes for the measurement model were reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The results of the measurement model, in Table 2, show that the composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha of each variable were greater than 0.7, showing good stability. Construction validity includes convergent validity and discriminant validity. The minimum factor loading of the questions was 0.731, which was higher than the critical value of 0.7. The average variance extracted (AVE) was between 0.676 and 0.776, also above the critical value of 0.5. This means that there was good convergent validity between the questions measuring the same variable. This paper used the Fornell–Larcker criterion to evaluate the discriminant validity. This approach holds that the square root of AVE for each variable needs to be greater than the highest correlation of any other structure. Table 2 shows that every variable used in the model met this requirement.

The analysis showed that the reliability and validity of each latent variable in the model met the corresponding standards. The measurement model therefore had good reliability and validity.

Table 2. Measurement Model Results.

Construct and Indicators	Mean	SD	Loadings	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha	Discriminant Validity
Entertainment				0.708	0.906	0.862	0.841
Being in Qianshan Mountain made me pleasant and relaxed	5.473	1.462	0.896				
Traveling in Qianshan Mountain was amusing	5.407	1.219	0.877				
Traveling in Qianshan Mountain made me surprised	5.254	1.282	0.769				
I really enjoyed visiting Qianshan Mountain	5.334	1.304	0.818				

Table 2. Cont.

Construct and Indicators	Mean	SD	Loadings	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha	Discriminant Validity
Aesthetics				0.684	0.894	0.846	0.827
The scenery in Qianshan Mountain was very attractive	5.527	1.202	0.893				
The environment in Qianshan Mountain was exciting	5.120	1.291	0.731				
The setting of Qianshan Mountain was unique	5.178	1.175	0.854				
Qianshan Mountain gave me a sense of harmony	5.268	1.303	0.823				
Escapism				0.706	0.906	0.861	0.840
Being in Qianshan Mountain made me feel like I had escaped from reality	5.288	1.198	0.850				
I felt that the environment of Qianshan Mountain was different from that of my daily life	5.432	1.267	0.789				
I felt like part of Qianshan Mountain's environment	5.180	1.192	0.888				
On this trip, I was so absorbed that I forgot everything else	5.173	1.362	0.832				
Education				0.676	0.893	0.840	0.822
The trip to Qianshan Mountain taught me a lot about the mountain	4.734	1.338	0.758				
The trip to Qianshan Mountain has made me more knowledgeable	4.661	1.295	0.825				
The trip to Qianshan Mountain has helped and inspired me in my work and life	4.695	1.333	0.865				
This trip stimulated my curiosity to learn more about Qianshan Mountain	4.675	1.488	0.837				
Place Identity				0.689	0.898	0.850	0.830
I liked Qianshan Mountain very much	5.529	1.208	0.831				
It was important for me to visit Qianshan Mountain	5.307	1.270	0.865				
The tourist experience in Qianshan Mountain was very special to me	5.078	1.151	0.831				
The tourist experience in Qianshan Mountain was a part of me	4.893	1.237	0.791				
Nature Bonding				0.720	0.912	0.871	0.849
I was very satisfied with the natural environment of Qianshan Mountain	5.290	1.180	0.834				
I felt calm when I spent time in the natural environment of Qianshan Mountain	5.095	1.233	0.876				
Being in the natural environment of Qianshan Mountain increased my understanding of myself	4.841	1.234	0.841				
When I was in the natural environment of Qianshan Mountain, I felt at one with the environment	4.912	1.275	0.843				
Place Dependence				0.776	0.912	0.856	0.881
No place can meet my needs better than Qianshan Mountain	4.861	1.209	0.859				
No other place can compare with Qianshan Mountain	4.571	1.281	0.905				
No other place can replace my experience in Qianshan Mountain	4.534	1.360	0.878				

Table 2. Cont.

Construct and Indicators	Mean	SD	Loadings	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha	Discriminant Validity
General behavior				0.769	0.930	0.900	0.877
I will read some reports or books about the environment in Qianshan Mountain	4.500	1.252	0.867				
I will work hard to learn how to solve the environmental problems in Qianshan Mountain	4.283	1.313	0.900				
I will discuss the environmental protection of Qianshan Mountain with people	4.363	1.399	0.905				
I will try my best to persuade my friends to protect the natural environment of Qianshan Mountain	4.612	1.563	0.833				
Particular behavior				0.773	0.932	0.903	0.879
If there is rubbish on the road, I will pick it up	4.754	1.537	0.880				
I would like to take part in cleaning up the mountain	4.446	1.654	0.842				
If there is any damage to Qianshan Mountain, I will stop it by legal means	4.405	1.640	0.907				
If someone damages the environment in Qianshan Mountain, I will inform the relevant authorities	4.471	1.741	0.888				

3.2.2. Structural Model

The significance of path coefficients underwent bootstrap testing in PLS. The results are shown in Table 3 and Figure 1.

Hypotheses H1, H2, H3, and H4 were proven, showing that the tourism experience had positive effects on place attachment.

H1 (H1a, H1b, H1c) partially verified the positive influence of entertainment experience on place attachment of the mountain tourists. It was found that entertainment experience positively affected place identity ($\beta = 0.277, p < 0.001$) and nature bonding ($\beta = 0.151, p < 0.025$). The hypothesis that entertainment experience positively affects place dependence ($\beta = 0.083, p = 0.229 > 0.05$) did not pass the significance test of the path coefficient. Therefore, H1 was only partially supported.

H2 (H2a, H2b, H2c) posited that aesthetic experience positively affects place attachment. The path coefficient and the test result showed that for the mountain tourists', the aesthetic experience positively affected place identity ($\beta = 0.258, p < 0.001$), nature bonding ($\beta = 0.305, p < 0.001$), and place dependence ($\beta = 0.332, p < 0.001$). All the sub-hypotheses were proven valid. Thus, the hypothesis that the mountain tourists' aesthetic experience positively affects their place attachment was supported.

H3 (H3a, H3b, H3c) proposed that escape experience has a positive effect on place attachment. It was shown that the mountain tourists' escape experience had significant positive effects on place identity ($\beta = 0.275, p < 0.001$), nature bonding ($\beta = 0.374, p < 0.001$), and place dependence ($\beta = 0.196, p < 0.05$). H3 was therefore supported.

H4 (H4a, H4b, H4c) held that educational experience positively affects place attachment. The mountain tourists' education experience had a significant impact on place identity ($\beta = 0.196, p < 0.05$), and place dependence ($\beta = 0.150, p < 0.001$). However, education experience directly influenced nature bonding ($\beta = 0.080, p = 0.070 > 0.05$). Therefore, H4 was partially proved.

In addition, this paper hypothesized that the mountain tourists' place attachment positively affects ERB. It was proven by H5, H6 and H7.

H5 (H5a and H5b) posited that the mountain tourists' place identity positively affects their ERB. The results show that place identity positively influenced general ERB ($\beta = 0.164$, $p < 0.05$) and had no direct impact on particular ERB ($\beta = 0.094$, $p = 0.240 > 0.05$). H5 was therefore partially supported.

Table 3. The Results of Hypotheses.

Hypotheses	Coefficient	t-Values	Result
H1a: Entertainment → Place identity	0.277 ***	4.010	Supported
H1b: Entertainment → Nature bonding	0.151 *	2.244	Supported
H1c: Entertainment → Place dependence	0.083	1.202	Not supported
H2a: Aesthetics → Place identity	0.258 ***	3.591	Supported
H2b: Aesthetics → Nature bonding	0.305 ***	4.382	Supported
H2c: Aesthetics → Place dependence	0.332 ***	4.815	Supported
H3a: Escapism → Place identity	0.275 ***	3.883	Supported
H3b: Escapism → Nature bonding	0.374 ***	5.518	Supported
H3c: Escapism → Place dependence	0.196 **	2.893	Supported
H4a: Education → Place identity	0.126 **	2.867	Supported
H4b: Education → Nature bonding	0.080	1.810	Not supported
H4c: Education → Place dependence	0.150 ***	3.222	Supported
H5a: Place identity → General behavior	0.164 *	2.279	Supported
H5b: Place identity → Particular behavior	0.094	1.176	Not supported
H6a: Nature bonding → General behavior	0.374 ***	4.537	Supported
H6b: Nature bonding → Particular behavior	0.352 ***	4.239	Supported
H7a: Place dependence → General behavior	0.026	0.397	Not supported
H7b: Place dependence → Particular behavior	0.061	1.043	Not supported

Note: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Figure 1. Structural model results (Note: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$).

H6 (H6a and H6b) posited that the mountain tourists' nature bonding positively affects their ERB. Table 3 shows that nature bonding had a positive effect on general ERB ($\beta = 0.374, p < 0.001$) and particular ERB ($\beta = 0.352, p < 0.001$), which fully supported the hypothesis that nature bonding has a significant effect on ERB.

H7 (H7a and H7b) posited that the mountain tourists' place dependence positively affects their ERB. The results showed that place dependence did not influence general ERB ($\beta = 0.026, p = 0.692 > 0.05$) or particular ERB ($\beta = 0.061, p = 0.297 > 0.05$). It completely refuted the hypothesis that place dependence positively affects ERB. H7 was not proved.

PLS-SEM was used to predict the SEM in this paper. The explanatory abilities of this model for place identity, nature bonding, and place dependence were 68.5%, 67.1%, and 44.4%, respectively. The explanatory power of general and particular ERB were 28.5% and 22.7%, respectively. These values of explanatory power are much higher than the standard proposed by Hair et al. [96]. This means that R^2 is greater than or equal to 20% in consumer behavior research; which is considered to have high explanatory power. Overall goodness of fit index of PLS-SEM was obtained by calculating the square root of product of AVE and average of R^2 . The goodness-of-fit index of the model was higher than the critical value of 0.36–0.578, meaning that the model was a good fit.

Furthermore, the statistics showed that the percentage of women respondents (56.1%) was higher than the percentage of men (43.9%). Of the respondents, 61.7% had a bachelor's degree, roughly consistent with the demographic and educational statistics provided by the Chinese government. At the same time, this paper used SPSS to conduct an independent sample T-test to explore whether there were significant gender differences in the tourist experience, place attachment or ERB. The results showed that the significant values of tourist experience, place attachment and ERB in the mean T-test are greater than 0.05, which means that there was no difference. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Independent Sample T-test Results of Gender on Tourist Experience, Place Attachment and Environmentally Responsible Behavior.

			Levene Test of Variance Equation					T-Test of Mean Value Equation			
			F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (Bilateral)	Mean Difference	Standard Error Value	95% Confidence Interval of Difference Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Tourist Experience	Entertainment	Equal variances assumed	4.574	0.033	0.397	408	0.692	0.17536	0.44217	−0.69386	1.04459
		Equal variances not assumed			0.401	398.258	0.689	0.17536	0.43736	−0.68445	1.03518
	Aesthetic	Equal variances assumed	0.870	0.357	−0.379	408	0.705	−0.15531	0.40943	−0.96016	0.64954
		Equal variances not assumed			−0.381	388.929	0.704	−0.15531	0.40818	−0.95782	0.64719
	Escapism	Equal variances assumed	3.326	0.069	−0.995	408	0.320	−0.41763	0.41956	−1.24241	0.40714
		Equal variances not assumed			−1.003	394.332	0.317	−0.41763	0.41649	−1.23644	0.40118
Place attachment	Education	Equal variances assumed	0.201	0.654	−1.140	408	0.255	−0.50918	0.44679	−1.38747	0.36911
		Equal variances not assumed			−1.141	386.345	0.255	−0.50918	0.44626	−1.38658	0.36822
	Place identity	Equal variances assumed	0.000	0.992	−0.098	408	0.922	−0.03961	0.40302	−0.83186	0.75263
		Equal variances not assumed			−0.098	381.159	0.922	−0.03961	0.40396	−0.83389	0.75466
	Nature bonding	Equal variances assumed	1.236	0.267	0.142	408	0.887	0.05918	0.41691	−0.76038	0.87873
		Equal variances not assumed			0.143	394.710	0.886	0.05918	0.41372	−0.75419	0.87254
ERB	Place dependence	Equal variances assumed	0.688	0.407	−0.025	408	0.980	−0.00845	0.33882	−0.67451	0.65760
		Equal variances not assumed			−0.025	374.123	0.980	−0.00845	0.34112	−0.67921	0.66230
	General behavior	Equal variances assumed	0.117	0.732	−1.037	408	0.300	−0.50048	0.48262	−1.44921	0.44824
		Equal variances not assumed			−1.037	385.141	0.300	−0.50048	0.48245	−1.44906	0.44809
	Particular behavior	Equal variances assumed	0.003	0.958	−1.317	408	0.188	−0.75870	0.57592	−1.89083	0.37344
		Equal variances not assumed			−1.314	380.257	0.190	−0.75870	0.57761	−1.89440	0.37701

4. Discussion

This paper identifies the sources contributing to the formation of ERB in mountain tourism in China. The results show that tourists' ERB is influenced by different levels of tourism experience and place attachment.

Part of place attachment directly influences ERB. Place identity can promote general ERB, while nature bonding promotes general and particular ERB. It shows that the special natural environment of Qianshan Mountain makes the tourists enjoy and care about the mountain ecosystem. It shows that the tourists encourage each other to protect the environment and criticize those who abuse it [53]. At the same time, tourists have a strong emotional connection with the mountain ecosystem, which explains how they develop a special ERB such as picking up litter [10].

Tourist experience indirectly affects ERB through place attachment. Entertainment experience has a positive effect on place identity and nature bonding; aesthetic and escape experiences have positive effects on place identity, nature bonding and place dependence; education experience has positive effects on place identity and place dependence. The results show that tourists are most impressed by the sense of physical and mental freedom while in the mountains. This is the main reason for the formation of place attachment. The entertainment experiences of tourists improve their positive emotions and strengthen their relationship to the land [97]. It leads to the formation of place identity and nature bonding. In addition, knowledge and learning opportunities can improve tourists' emotions and understanding of Qianshan Mountain that will develop their place identity and place dependence [98].

The relationship between entertainment experience and place dependence in mountain tourism was not identified. Place dependence is the relationship between people and place at the levels of cognition (thought, knowledge, belief), practice (action and behavior), and emotion (mood and feeling) [23,99,100]. All three levels focus on the functional attributes of a place. However, tourist demand for entertainment experiences are focused on the physiological level [94]. Entertainment facilities and services are scarce in Qianshan Mountain, so it is difficult for tourists to develop place dependence with entertainment experiences.

The relationship between education experience and nature bonding of mountain tourism was not supported. Nature bonding focuses on the natural environment of the destination and the emotional connection between the tourist and environment [50]. In contrast, education experience emphasizes the cultural aspects of the destination [55]. Qianshan Mountain is home to many natural and ecological landscapes that enable tourists to experience feelings inspired by the beautiful aesthetics, while the landscapes with cultural aspects and knowledge elements are likely to attract tourists' attention. Therefore, tourists do not have an education experience in Qianshan Mountain. It is, however, difficult to promote the emotional connection between tourists and the mountain ecosystem.

The relationship between place identity and particular ERBs was not supported because tourists had little awareness of the ecological vulnerability of the mountain. They were largely unaware of environmental protection, so the tourists' behavior was at the level of general ERB and it is hard to generate particular ERB.

Neither hypothesis between place dependence and ERBs were supported. A possible reason is that place dependence, as a functional attachment to a particular place, has strong physical characteristics and demand properties [88,95]. However, the functional properties of place dependence are concentrated on aesthetic, escape, and education in Qianshan Mountain. The scenic spot fails to play these roles, and so it is not possible to establish a direct and close demand relationship between the tourists and ERB, which leads to place dependence failing to generate ERB.

5. Conclusions

This paper finds that tourist behaviors have a close relationship with their feelings and psychological changes. It demonstrates the relationship between the ERBs of tourists, their

tourism experience and place attachment; and takes Qianshan Mountain as an example. The conclusions are as follows.

The internal psychological and emotional mechanism of ERB based on tourist experience is explored. Four types of tourist experience are shown to have different effects on ERBs through place identity, nature bonding and place dependence. The results show that escape and aesthetic experiences affect general and particular ERB through nature bonding. The relaxed atmosphere and picturesque scenery helps tourists understand the relationship between people and nature; and they might take action to protect nature and conserve the mountain landscape by adopting ERBs such as picking up garbage. Entertainment experience affects general ERB through place identity and nature bonding. Tourists may discuss environmental problems when they believe that the mountain landscape is part of the “self” and the emotional affinity towards nature through an entertainment experience. Education experience affects general ERB through place identity. The tourists care about environmental problems and educate themselves with knowledge of environmental protection when they immerse themselves in the mountain landscape. Therefore, mountain landscape can be designed from the perspective of an entertainment experience, landscape aesthetic, leisure atmosphere and with educational functions, so that tourists can spontaneously pay attention to environmental issues and participate in the practical activities of environmental protection.

6. Theoretical and Managerial Implications

6.1. Theoretical Implications

This paper focuses on the mountain tourism ecosystem and the ways in which tourists can implement ERB to support the coordinated development of tourism and ecology. It departs from the traditional view that tourist satisfaction or tourism experience is a factor in tourists’ ERB and expands it to include the tourists’ positive feelings about the destination. It breaks down the dimensions of the traditional tourism experience, such as hedonism, participation, novelty; or hedonism, involvement, novelty, local culture; and takes entertainment, education, aesthetics and escape as the dimensions. ERB follows the path of “experience–psychology–behavior.” Place attachment, with a special focus on the human–land relationship, is taken as the traditional relationship of tourist experience and ERB. Meanwhile, considering the natural characteristics of mountain tourism, this paper gives up the traditional two-dimensional view of place attachment and takes nature bonding into the framework of place attachment, and shows the relationship of nature bonding and different tourism experiences or ERBs. Finally, a mechanism for the formation of tourist ERB in a mountain tourism ecosystem is identified.

6.2. Managerial Implications

Nature bonding is the key to ERB in mountain tourism. Entertainment experience has little influence on nature bonding in Qianshan Mountain. Therefore, Qianshan Scenic Area needs to expand its recreational facilities. Qianshan Mountain could build a natural rainbow slide and a zip-line to attract younger or more adventure-seeking tourists. In addition, planning and design should be implemented for tourists to enjoy natural entertainment, such as rope net climbing, or combination slide and swings. Evening and temple fair activities should also be offered. Mountain biking, marathons and other sport events can improve tourists’ entertainment experiences.

Because of the weakness of place identity and place dependence, particular ERBs are largely absent in Qianshan Mountain. Qianshan Scenic could be designed according to the topography, shape, and trend of the mountain from an aesthetic perspective. Plant arrangement and landscape accessories could be designed from the perspective of their colors. The arrangement of plants from different distances and perspectives will create beautiful stratification and sequences in the landscape. In terms of escape, improvements could be made in food, hotel, and transportation. The dining environment should offer a variety of cave restaurants, temple restaurants, tree house restaurants, sky restaurants, and revolving

restaurants on top of the mountain. Serving innovative dishes can enable the tourists to enjoy escape through a culinary experience. In terms of educational experience, there should be partnerships with schools, research institutions, and tourism institutions. Tourists can learn about nature, ecology, and living creatures through observation, exploration in nature schools, or in classrooms.

7. Limitations and Future Research Directions

The formation of ERB based on tourist experience and place attachment is applicable only to Qianshan Mountain in this paper. The applicability of the conclusions to other mountain ecosystems or tourist destinations remains to be further studied. As an important concept in the “human–land” relationship, place attachment is influenced by environment, society, culture, faith, sociology, psychology, and management. Whether other factors influence ERB through place attachment remain to be further studied. In addition, if these findings are compared with those of other scenic spots, the results would have greater significance.

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