

Exploring the Relationship between Place Attachment and Visitor Satisfaction in Agro-Tourism: A Case Study of Selangor Fruit Valley

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between place attachment and visitor satisfaction at Selangor Fruit Valley, an agrotourism destination in Selangor, Malaysia. Place attachment was conceptualised through four dimensions: place identity, place dependence, place affect, and place social bonding. A cross-sectional quantitative survey was administered to visitors, yielding 167 usable responses. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Mann-Whitney U tests, and Spearman's rank-order correlation with bootstrapped confidence intervals. The findings show moderate levels of place attachment and visitor satisfaction among respondents. Place attachment was positively and significantly associated with visitor satisfaction, $p = .63$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.50, .71]. Gender did not show significant differences in overall place attachment or visitor satisfaction, although place dependence differed significantly by gender. Visitation status showed clearer differences, with first-time and repeat visitors reporting significantly different levels of place attachment and satisfaction. These findings suggest that agrotourism managers can improve visitor satisfaction by strengthening visitors' emotional, functional, identity-based, and social connections with the destination. The study contributes context-specific evidence on visitor-place relationships in Malaysian agrotourism and provides practical guidance for improving visitor experience at agrotourism sites.

Keywords: Agrotourism, place attachment, place identity, place dependence, visitor satisfaction, Selangor Fruit Valley

INTRODUCTION

Agrotourism has become an increasingly important segment of the tourism industry because it connects agricultural production, rural landscapes, local culture, and visitor experience within a single destination setting. In Malaysia, agrotourism contributes not only to tourism diversification but also to rural development by creating new sources of income, promoting local products, and encouraging visitors to engage directly with agricultural life. As urban visitors seek educational, recreational, and nature-based experiences, agrotourism destinations are under growing pressure to provide services and environments that are both meaningful and satisfying (Jaunis et al., 2022).

Selangor Fruit Valley represents one of Malaysia's prominent agrotourism destinations. Developed by Perbadanan Kemajuan Pertanian Selangor, the site offers fruit orchards, gardens, animal attractions, and educational activities that allow visitors to experience agricultural life in an interactive way. Its recognition as a Best Agrotourism Destination in the Malaysia Tourism Council Gold Awards has strengthened its visibility and competitive position. However, destination success cannot be explained by facilities and attractions alone. Visitors also form emotional, symbolic, and social connections with places, and these connections may shape how they evaluate their overall experience (Man & Aspany, 2020).

Visitor satisfaction remains a central concern in tourism management because it influences revisit intention, positive word of mouth, destination loyalty, and long-term competitiveness. In agrotourism, satisfaction is especially important because the experience depends not only on service delivery but also on the atmosphere of the site, the authenticity of activities, and the quality of visitor engagement with the place. A destination may offer attractive physical features, yet still fail to generate a strong and memorable experience if visitors do not feel connected to it in meaningful ways (Cheng et al., 2022).

The concept of place attachment provides a useful lens for understanding this issue. Place attachment refers to the emotional and functional bond that individuals develop with a destination over time or through meaningful experience. In tourism research, it is commonly examined through dimensions such as place identity, place dependence, place affect, and place social bonding. These dimensions reflect the extent to which visitors see a destination as personally meaningful, useful for their activities, emotionally important, and socially enriching. When visitors form stronger attachments to a place, they may be more likely to report higher satisfaction with their visit (Inalhan et al., 2021).

Although the relationship between place attachment and satisfaction has received attention in selected tourism contexts, evidence remains limited in Malaysian agrotourism settings. This study addresses that gap by examining the relationship between place attachment and visitor satisfaction at Selangor Fruit Valley. Specifically, it evaluates whether the four dimensions of place attachment are associated with visitor satisfaction and whether meaningful differences exist across visitor groups. By doing so, the study contributes both theoretical insight and practical guidance for agrotourism destination management (Ramkissoon et al., 2014). Therefore, this study examines the relationship between place attachment and visitor satisfaction among visitors to Selangor Fruit Valley. Specifically, it aims to assess the levels of place attachment and visitor satisfaction, examine the relationship between both constructs, determine whether differences exist across selected visitor characteristics, and propose management strategies for strengthening visitor satisfaction in agrotourism settings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Agrotourism Context

Agrotourism refers to tourism activities that take place in agricultural settings and allow visitors to experience farming, food production, rural environments, and local culture. It is often viewed as part of rural tourism, but it is distinguished by the direct role of agricultural resources and farm-based experiences. Agrotourism can generate economic benefits for local communities while promoting education, sustainability, and appreciation of agricultural heritage. In destinations such as Selangor Fruit Valley, the agrotourism experience is shaped by both tangible features, such as facilities and attractions, and intangible qualities, such as atmosphere, authenticity, and emotional connection (Jaunis et al., 2022).

Visitor Satisfaction

Visitor satisfaction refers to a visitor's overall evaluation of the extent to which a destination experience meets or exceeds expectations. It reflects both cognitive assessment and emotional response after interaction with the services, facilities, environment, and activities offered at a destination. High visitor satisfaction is associated with revisit intention, loyalty, and positive recommendations, making it a critical indicator of destination performance. In agrotourism, satisfaction may depend not only on service quality and physical resources but also on how visitors feel about the destination and the meaning they attach to the experience (Velmurugan et al., 2021).

Place Attachment

Place attachment describes the bond individuals develop with a specific place through emotion, meaning, and experience. It is widely used in tourism and environmental psychology to explain why people value particular destinations and how these bonds influence attitudes and behaviour. In tourism settings, place attachment may influence satisfaction, loyalty, environmental concern, and behavioural intention. This study treats place attachment as a multidimensional construct consisting of place identity, place dependence, place affect, and place

social bonding.

Place Identity

Place identity refers to the extent to which a destination becomes part of an individual's self-concept. A visitor with strong place identity perceives the destination as personally meaningful and connected to who they are. In agrotourism, place identity may develop when visitors associate the destination with rural values, nature appreciation, family memory, or lifestyle expression. Stronger place identity is therefore expected to contribute to more positive evaluations of the visit (Al-Mohammedy et al., 2022).

Place Dependence

Place dependence refers to the functional value of a destination and the extent to which it supports a visitor's preferred activities better than alternative places. A destination is likely to generate stronger place dependence when it provides distinctive facilities, settings, or experiences that visitors cannot easily obtain elsewhere. In the context of Selangor Fruit Valley, place dependence may emerge from educational farm experiences, orchard activities, or the suitability of the destination for leisure and family outings (Chen et al., 2022).

Place Affect

Place affect refers to the emotional bond a visitor develops with a destination. It captures feelings such as happiness, comfort, attachment, and affection toward the place. In tourism, place affect is particularly important because emotional response often shapes how memorable and meaningful the experience becomes. Positive emotional reactions to the setting, activities, and atmosphere of Selangor Fruit Valley are therefore likely to strengthen overall satisfaction (Nasir et al., 2024).

Place Social Bonding

Place social bonding reflects the interpersonal and communal connections that emerge through shared experiences at a destination. Visitors may build or strengthen social relationships with family members, friends, or other visitors through meaningful interaction at the site. In agrotourism settings, social bonding can be reinforced through group activities, family-oriented experiences, and shared appreciation of rural life. This social dimension may add depth to the destination experience and contribute to satisfaction (Ramkissoon et al., 2014).

Research Framework

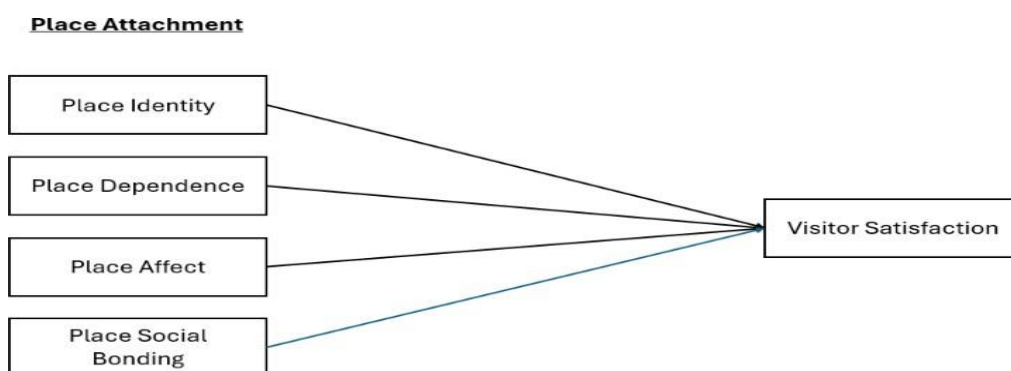


Figure 1 showed the framework of this study that displayed place attachment as the independent variable, whilst visitor satisfaction was the dependent variable.

The framework of this study displayed place attachment as the independent variable, whilst visitor satisfaction was the dependent variable. This conveys that 'place attachment' refers to the emotional bond visitors feel towards Selangor Fruit Valley, and 'visitor satisfaction' refers to the contentment visitors are with their experience at Selangor Fruit Valley. To conclude that place attachment is likely to affect visitor satisfaction, the concept of place attachment needs to be heeded. Empirical studies support that the visitors with strong attachment to a particular place tend to report higher satisfaction. This has practical consequences for managing sites, since

boosting place attachment through individualized experiences and retaining the distinctive traits of the area can result in higher visitor pleasure.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationship between place attachment and visitor satisfaction at Selangor Fruit Valley, Selangor, Malaysia. A cross-sectional design was appropriate because the study measured visitors' perceptions at one point in time. The target respondents were visitors aged 18 years and above. Convenience sampling was used because respondents were approached at the destination during the data collection period.

Although the initial target sample was 383 respondents based on the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size table, the final study obtained 167 usable responses. This limitation is reported transparently because a smaller achieved sample size reduces the generalisability of the findings. The sample included 66 male respondents and 101 female respondents. Most respondents were first-time visitors, while 20 respondents were repeat visitors.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of four sections: demographic profile, place attachment, visitor satisfaction, and suggestions for improvement. Place attachment was measured using 12 items based on four dimensions: place identity, place dependence, place affect, and place social bonding. Visitor satisfaction was measured using eight items. All main items used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree.

A pilot test was conducted before the main survey to check whether the questionnaire was clear and suitable. Although 30 respondents were targeted for the pilot test, only 16 usable responses were collected. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The reliability result showed strong internal consistency for place attachment, $\alpha = .92$, and acceptable internal consistency for visitor satisfaction, $\alpha = .80$. These values indicate that the items used to measure each construct were reliable for the present study. A Cronbach's alpha value of .70 or above is commonly considered acceptable in social science research, although very high values should also be interpreted carefully because they may indicate item similarity (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

The main survey was distributed through QR codes placed at selected checkpoints in Selangor Fruit Valley. Visitors could scan the QR code and answer the questionnaire during their visit. Data collection was mainly conducted during weekends because more visitors were available. Since all data were collected using self-reported questionnaires, the study may be exposed to common method bias. This issue was acknowledged in the interpretation of the findings because common method bias can occur when independent and dependent variables are collected from the same respondents using the same method (Kock et al., 2021).

The data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive analysis was used to describe the respondents' profile and the main variables. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed that the data were not normally distributed. Therefore, non-parametric tests were used. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare differences based on gender and visitation status. Spearman's rank correlation was used to examine the relationship between place attachment and visitor satisfaction. Bootstrapping was also used to estimate the confidence interval for the correlation result. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Variable	No. of Item	Cronbach's Alpha
Place Attachment	12	0.92
Visitor Satisfaction	8	0.80

Demographic Analysis

Table 2 presents the demographic profile of the respondents. The study analysed 167 usable responses. Female respondents formed the majority of the sample, with 101 respondents, or 60.5%, while male respondents represented 66 respondents, or 39.5%. The largest age group was 25 to 34 years old, 39.5%, followed by 18 to

24 years old, 23.4%, and 35 to 44 years old, 22.8%. Most respondents were first-time visitors, 88.0%, while repeat visitors represented 12.0% of the sample. This distribution suggests that the findings mainly reflect the views of first-time visitors.

Table 2: Demographic Analysis

Category	Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	66	39.5
	Female	101	60.5
Age	18 – 24 years old	39	23.4
	25 – 34 years old	66	39.5
	35 – 44 years old	38	22.8
	45 – 54 years old	17	10.2
	55 – 64 years old	5	3.0
	Above 65 years old	2	1.2
Occupation	Self-employed	15	9.0
	Public sector	49	29.3
	Private sector	38	22.8
	Unemployed	13	7.8
	Retired	3	1.8
	Others	49	29.3
Visitation Status	First-time visitor	147	88.0
	Repeat visitor	20	12.0

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics indicated a moderate overall level of place attachment, $M = 3.559$, $SD = 0.452$, and a moderate overall level of visitor satisfaction, $M = 3.649$, $SD = 0.384$. Among the place attachment dimensions, place social bonding recorded the highest mean score, $M = 3.70$, followed by place dependence, $M = 3.66$, place affect, $M = 3.56$, and place identity, $M = 3.33$. These results suggest that visitors reported relatively stronger social and functional attachment than symbolic identity attachment.

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis

Variable/dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Overall place attachment	3.559	0.452	Moderate
Place dependence	3.66	0.398	Moderate to high
Place identity	3.33	0.597	Moderate
Place affect	3.56	0.555	Moderate
Place social bonding	3.70	0.491	Moderate to high
Visitor satisfaction	3.649	0.384	Moderate

Normality Test

Normality tests indicated that the study variables were not normally distributed. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for visitor satisfaction was significant (statistic = 0.102, $df = 167$, $p < 0.001$), and the Shapiro-Wilk test was also significant ($W = 0.967$, $df = 167$, $p < 0.001$). The normality results justified the use of non-parametric statistical techniques for subsequent analysis.

Table 4: Normality Test Results

Variable	Test	Statistics	df	Sig.
Place Attachment	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Not Reported	167	0.000
Visitor Satisfaction	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	0.102	167	0.000

Group Differences by Gender

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare male and female respondents. As shown in Table 5, there was no significant difference in overall place attachment between male and female visitors, $p = .110$. There was also no significant difference in visitor satisfaction by gender, $p = .979$. This indicates that gender did not significantly affect overall place attachment or visitor satisfaction.

Table 5: Mann-Whitney U Test by Gender

Variable	Mann- Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Sig.
Place Attachment	2846.500	5057.500	-1.599	0.110
Visitor Satisfaction	3325.000	8476.000	-0.026	0.979

Differences in Place Attachment Dimensions

The four dimensions of place attachment were also tested by gender. As shown in Table 6, only place dependence showed a significant difference by gender, $U = 2708.500$, $p = .033$. Place identity, place affect, and place social bonding did not show significant gender differences. This finding suggests that male and female visitors may differ in how they evaluate the functional value of Selangor Fruit Valley, but they do not differ significantly in identity-based, emotional, or social attachment.

Table 6: Mann-Whitney U Test for Place Attachment Dimensions by Gender

Dimension	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Sig.
Place dependence	2708.500	4919.500	-2.132	.033
Place identity	2865.000	5076.000	-1.603	.109
Place affect	3128.000	5339.000	-0.693	.488
Place social bonding	2807.500	5018.500	-1.843	.065

Table 7 shows the comparison by visitation status. Place dependence, place identity, and place affect showed significant differences between first-time and repeat visitors. The results were significant for place dependence, $U = 1025.000$, $p = .022$, place identity, $U = 883.000$, $p = .002$, and place affect, $U = 913.000$, $p = .005$. Place social bonding was not significant, $U = 1149.000$, $p = .090$. These findings indicate that first-time and repeat visitors differ more clearly in functional, identity-based, and emotional attachment than in social bonding.

Table 7: Mann-Whitney U Test for Place Attachment Dimensions by Visitation Status

Dimension	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Sig.
Place dependence	1025.000	11903.000	-2.288	.022
Place identity	883.000	11761.000	-3.027	.002
Place affect	913.000	11791.000	-2.837	.005
Place social bonding	1149.000	12027.000	-1.695	.090

Relationship Between Place Attachment and Visitor Satisfaction

Spearman's rank correlation was used to examine the relationship between place attachment and visitor satisfaction. As shown in Table 8, the result showed a strong positive relationship between the two variables, $\rho = .63$, $p < .001$. The bootstrapped 95% confidence interval ranged from .50 to .71. This means that visitors with stronger place attachment tended to report higher visitor satisfaction.

Table 8: Spearman Correlation Between Place Attachment and Visitor Satisfaction

Variables	Spearman's rho	Sig.	Bootstrapped 95% CI
Place attachment and visitor satisfaction	0.63	0.001	[0.50, 0.71]

DISCUSSION

The findings show that place attachment has a strong positive relationship with visitor satisfaction at Selangor Fruit Valley. The Spearman correlation result, $\rho = .63$, $p < .001$, indicates that visitors who felt more attached to the destination also tended to report higher satisfaction. This supports the study hypothesis and suggests that satisfaction in agrotourism is shaped not only by facilities and services, but also by how visitors emotionally, functionally, personally, and socially connect with the destination.

This finding is consistent with previous tourism research. Ramkissoon et al. (2014) found that visitor satisfaction and place attachment are closely connected in national park settings. Sivalioğlu and Berköz (2016) also found a relationship between place attachment and user satisfaction in national parks in Turkey. Although Selangor Fruit Valley is an agrotourism site rather than a national park, the same theoretical logic applies. Visitors may become more satisfied when the destination provides meaningful experiences, comfort, emotional value, and a sense of connection.

The results also show that gender did not significantly affect overall place attachment or visitor satisfaction. Male and female visitors appeared to evaluate Selangor Fruit Valley in broadly similar ways. However, place dependence showed a significant gender difference. This may indicate that male and female visitors differ slightly in how they evaluate the functional value of the destination, including its facilities, activities, setting, and suitability for recreation. This result should be interpreted carefully because the study did not examine why this gender difference occurred.

Visitation status produced clearer findings. First-time and repeat visitors differed significantly in both place attachment and visitor satisfaction. The dimension-level results also showed significant differences in place dependence, place identity, and place affect, while place social bonding was not significant. This suggests that repeat visitation may be associated with stronger functional, identity-based, and emotional connections with the destination. Ispas et al. (2021) similarly found that place identity and place dependence were linked with satisfaction and loyalty in coastal destinations, with visitation frequency playing an important role.

The findings also respond to the study's theoretical contribution. The study extends the application of place attachment theory to Malaysian agrotourism by showing that visitor satisfaction can be understood through visitors' emotional, functional, identity-based, and social bonds with a destination. Existing place attachment studies have often focused on parks, coastal areas, or nature-based tourism settings. This study adds evidence from an agrotourism destination, where agricultural activities, family recreation, local products, and educational experiences create a different visitor-place relationship.

However, the study should not claim that place attachment causes visitor satisfaction. Since the study used a cross-sectional design, it can only show association between the variables. A longitudinal design would be needed to test whether place attachment develops over time and whether it directly increases visitor satisfaction across repeated visits.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Selangor Fruit Valley should improve both physical facilities and visitor experience design. The visitor suggestions in the original data highlighted several areas for improvement, including more benches, shaded rest areas, more suitable activities for older visitors, better photo spots, and additional toilets at checkpoints. These suggestions are practical because they address the comfort, activity quality, and emotional experience of visitors.

First, management should add more benches and shaded rest areas, especially in hilly areas and busy checkpoints. Visitors may enjoy the attractions, but limited resting spaces can reduce comfort and satisfaction. This improvement is especially important for families, older visitors, and visitors who spend longer periods at the destination.

Second, Selangor Fruit Valley should offer more interactive agrotourism activities for different age groups. Some activities appear more suitable for children. Management could introduce fruit harvesting, vegetable harvesting, short farm tours, guided agricultural demonstrations, food tasting sessions, and seasonal workshops. These

activities can strengthen place dependence because visitors may see the destination as a place that offers experiences they cannot easily find elsewhere.

Third, management should strengthen the emotional value of the visit. This can be done through better landscaping, clearer visitor routes, attractive photo areas, and memorable family-oriented spaces. Place affect is important because visitors often remember destinations through feelings, photographs, and shared experiences. When visitors associate Selangor Fruit Valley with happiness, comfort, and meaningful time with others, satisfaction is likely to increase.

Fourth, toilet availability and cleanliness should be improved at checkpoints. Basic facilities strongly influence satisfaction. Even when attractions are appealing, poor access to clean toilets can damage the overall visitor experience.

Fifth, Selangor Fruit Valley should create reasons for visitors to return. Seasonal fruit events, school holiday programmes, family packages, weekend farm markets, and loyalty promotions could encourage repeat visitation. This recommendation is important because repeat visitors in this study reported significant differences in place attachment and satisfaction.

Limitations and Future Research

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CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between place attachment and visitor satisfaction at Selangor Fruit Valley. The findings show that visitors reported moderate levels of place attachment and satisfaction. More importantly,

place attachment had a strong positive relationship with visitor satisfaction. Visitors who felt more connected to Selangor Fruit Valley were more likely to report higher satisfaction.

The study also found that first-time and repeat visitors differed significantly in place attachment and satisfaction, while gender differences were limited. These findings suggest that visitation status is an important issue for agrotourism management. Selangor Fruit Valley should therefore improve both destination facilities and meaningful visitor experiences to strengthen attachment and encourage satisfaction.

Overall, the study shows that place attachment is useful for understanding visitor satisfaction in agrotourism. For Selangor Fruit Valley, improving satisfaction requires more than maintaining attractions. It requires creating a destination that visitors find comfortable, meaningful, enjoyable, and worth revisiting.

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