



The Influence of Place Attachment and Nostalgic Proneness on Tourist Well-being: Evidence from Cultural Heritage Destinations in Taiwan

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Abstract

Background and Aims: Heritage tourism enhances cultural continuity and psychological well-being, yet most prior studies emphasize tourists' behavioral intentions rather than their deeper psychological outcomes. This study addresses this gap by investigating how place attachment dimensions—place dependence and place identity—together with nostalgic proneness—affect tourists' well-being at Sanxia Old Street, Taiwan.

Methodology: A quantitative survey was conducted with 386 domestic tourists visiting Sanxia Old Street, Taiwan. Data collected via a structured questionnaire (five-point Likert scale) were analyzed using SPSS 30 through descriptive, correlation, and multiple regression analyses to test hypothesized relationships among variables.

Results: Findings show that all three constructs significantly and positively influenced tourists' well-being, with place dependence emerging as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .681$, $p < .001$). The regression model explained 75.6% of the variance in well-being ($R^2 = .756$), confirming that both functional and emotional attachments, along with nostalgic feelings, play essential roles in enhancing tourists' psychological outcomes.

Conclusion: Functional usability, emotional connection, and nostalgic engagement are key contributors to tourist well-being in heritage contexts. Heritage managers can apply these insights by enhancing accessibility, preserving authenticity, and designing memory-based experiences to create more meaningful and restorative visits that sustain the cultural value of heritage tourism in Taiwan.

Keywords: Place Dependence; Place Identity; Nostalgic Proneness; Tourist Well-being; Sanxia Old Street; Taiwan





Introduction

Tourism has long been recognized as a vital driver of economic growth and quality of life across the Asia-Pacific region. In Taiwan, the *Tourism 2030 Policy White Paper* outlines strategic directions to strengthen competitiveness and revitalize the tourism sector in the post-pandemic era (Tourism Bureau, Ministry of Transportation and Communications, 2020). Among these initiatives, cultural and heritage-based attractions—such as *Sanxia Old Street*—play an essential role in promoting nostalgic tourism that preserves Taiwan’s cultural identity while enriching visitors’ emotional experiences. Prior studies have demonstrated that heritage nostalgia enhances perceived authenticity and satisfaction (Zhou, Xiang, Cheng, & Yang, 2021), and recent evidence shows that nostalgic experiences also generate psychological benefits by fostering emotional connections and a sense of belonging (Zhou et al., 2024). However, few studies have simultaneously examined how both place attachment dimensions and nostalgic proneness jointly predict tourist well-being, particularly within domestic heritage tourism in Taiwan. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates these relationships and extends self-determination and place attachment theories to the context of cultural heritage destinations.

Although Taiwan’s tourism industry has gradually recovered from the global downturn, domestic tourism continues to generate a smaller share of total tourism revenue compared with inbound markets (Tourism Bureau, Ministry of Transportation and Communications, 2023). This imbalance highlights the need to improve not only the scale but also the quality and psychological value of domestic travel experiences. Strengthening tourists’ sense of well-being aligns with the *Tourism 2030 Policy White Paper*, which emphasizes sustainable growth and community participation. Tourists who experience higher well-being are more likely to revisit, support local businesses, and engage in culturally meaningful activities—behaviors that advance Taiwan’s sustainable tourism goals. Consequently, culturally rooted and emotionally engaging attractions—such as nostalgic heritage destinations—have become vital for revitalizing domestic tourism and deepening travelers’ emotional connections with local culture (Wei, Zhou, & Li, 2024).

Much of the existing tourism literature has emphasized behavioral outcomes such as revisit intention, recommendation, and loyalty. In contrast, relatively few studies have examined psychological outcomes—particularly tourist well-being (Vada et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2020). Within the well-being framework, scholars distinguish between hedonic well-being, referring to immediate pleasure and enjoyment, and eudaimonic well-being, which reflects deeper meaning, self-realization, and personal growth (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Filep & Deery, 2010). From a destination management perspective, understanding tourists’ psychological well-being is essential for developing emotionally engaging and sustainable heritage experiences. Enhancing visitors’ well-being can strengthen positive word-of-mouth, destination image, and long-term loyalty—key





goals for sites such as Sanxia Old Street. Despite growing attention, research addressing both dimensions of well-being in tourism remains limited. Specifically, few studies have explored how emotional and cognitive bonds with destinations influence tourists' overall well-being, leaving an important empirical gap that this study aims to fill.

Although place attachment and nostalgia have been widely examined in relation to satisfaction, loyalty, and revisit intention (Kyle et al., 2004; Hwang et al., 2005; Tsai & Hsu, 2007), limited research has investigated their combined effects on tourist well-being. Previous studies indicate that nostalgic experiences promote self-continuity and life satisfaction (Cho, 2019; Jang & Feng, 2007). Nostalgia also functions as a source of psychological meaning and continuity, helping individuals maintain self-worth and emotional connection across time (Sedikides et al., 2008; Wildschut et al., 2006; Routledge, 2006). In tourism contexts, nostalgic cues—such as historical architecture or artifacts—evoke affective memories that enhance both hedonic pleasure and eudaimonic well-being (Holbrook, 1993; Cox et al., 2015). Likewise, place attachment—encompassing place dependence and place identity—reflects emotional and functional bonds with destinations that foster belonging and contribute to subjective well-being (Prayag et al., 2017; Ramkissoon, 2020). Importantly, nostalgic feelings may strengthen tourists' place attachment by deepening emotional connections and reinforcing place identity, suggesting that these constructs interact rather than operate independently. However, few studies have simultaneously examined how both place attachment dimensions and nostalgic proneness jointly predict tourist well-being, particularly within domestic heritage tourism in Taiwan. Accordingly, this study investigates these interrelationships among domestic travelers to Sanxia Old Street, aiming to extend place-attachment and self-determination theories to a heritage context and to provide practical insights for designing psychologically restorative and culturally meaningful visitor experiences.

Objectives

1. To assess tourists' perceptions of place attachment and nostalgic proneness in relation to their overall well-being at Sanxia Old Street.
2. To examine the influence of place attachment dimensions (place dependence and place identity) and nostalgic proneness on tourists' overall well-being.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Tourist Well-being

Well-being is increasingly recognized as a core outcome of tourism experiences (Vada et al., 2019). Within tourism research, it is viewed as a multidimensional construct encompassing both





hedonic enjoyment—derived from pleasure and sensory engagement—and eudaimonic fulfillment, reflecting self-realization and meaning in life (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Filep & Deery, 2010; Peng et al., 2023). This dual perspective suggests that memorable and meaningful experiences contribute not only to short-term happiness but also to long-term psychological enrichment (Buonincontri et al., 2017). Compared with satisfaction or hedonism, well-being provides a broader framework that integrates emotional pleasure, life satisfaction, and personal growth (Diener, 1984; Su et al., 2020).

In tourism contexts, destinations play a vital role in promoting well-being through sensory, emotional, and reflective experiences (Peng et al., 2023). Hedonic well-being represents immediate joy and relaxation, whereas eudaimonic well-being arises from purposeful and culturally meaningful engagement that enhances life satisfaction (Filep & Deery, 2010; Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018). While earlier research treated these two dimensions as distinct, recent studies argue they can overlap—hedonic pleasure may evolve into eudaimonic fulfillment when tourists encounter authenticity and personal growth. Moreover, the relative salience of hedonic versus eudaimonic outcomes varies by travel motivation, activity type, and cultural context (Park & Ahn, 2022; Filep et al., 2022). Post-pandemic tourism has further been recognized as a means of psychological recovery, emphasizing well-being as both a personal and social experience (Chen et al., 2017). Therefore, this study conceptualizes tourist well-being as a holistic construct capturing both the affective and psychological dimensions of happiness derived from travel. Understanding this dual nature of well-being provides a theoretical foundation for exploring how emotional bonds such as place attachment and nostalgic proneness shape positive psychological outcomes.

Place Attachment and Tourist Well-being

Place attachment refers to the emotional and psychological bonds individuals form with specific destinations, encompassing both functional dependence and emotional identity (Williams et al., 1992; Xu & Zhang, 2016). Place dependence describes the functional connection that arises when a location effectively supports tourists' activities and goals—for instance, when Sanxia Old Street provides easy access to traditional shops and cultural landmarks. In contrast, place identity reflects the symbolic meaning that allows tourists to perceive the destination as part of their self-concept and cultural belonging (Low & Altman, 1992; Kuo et al., 2021).

These connections are shaped by tourists' interactions with place attributes, cultural meanings, and personal experiences, making place attachment a key construct in understanding human–environment relationships. Such attachments often involve both functional and emotional dimensions that strengthen tourists' sense of belonging and continuity with a destination. Empirical studies have demonstrated that place attachment enhances tourists'



quality of life and subjective well-being (Prayag et al., 2017; Ramkissoon, 2020). Tourists who experience a sense of belonging and emotional connection with destinations are more likely to report positive affect, meaning, and life satisfaction (Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Trinanda, Sari, Cerya, & Riski, 2021). These findings imply that place attachment not only provides hedonic enjoyment and eudaimonic fulfillment but also may enhance nostalgic reflection, further deepening tourists' emotional well-being.

H1a: Place dependence has a positive influence on tourists' well-being.

H1b: Place identity has a positive influence on tourists' well-being.

Nostalgic Proneness and Tourist Well-being

Nostalgia has long been recognized as a reservoir of meaningful memories that help individuals maintain psychological continuity and cope with existential concerns (Sedikides et al., 2008; Wildschut et al., 2006). Nostalgic proneness, defined as a sentimental longing for the past, includes both personal nostalgia—rooted in one's own experiences—and historical nostalgia, which idealizes collective memories of earlier times (Stern, 1992; Muehling & Pascal, 2011). These nostalgic reflections evoke positive affect, belonging, and meaning, thereby fostering psychological well-being (Routledge, 2006; Sedikides et al., 2008).

In tourism contexts, nostalgic proneness motivates individuals to visit destinations that evoke personal or cultural memories, such as heritage towns and old streets (Holbrook, 1993; Cox et al., 2015). At Sanxia Old Street, nostalgic cues—including Japanese-era brick façades, baroque-style shop houses, traditional craft stores, and the aroma of handmade pastries—collectively trigger emotional memories of Taiwan's past. These sensory and symbolic experiences help tourists reimagine cultural history and strengthen their emotional connection to place. Such experiences often overlap with place attachment, as nostalgia can reinforce feelings of belonging and place identity that, in turn, enhance tourists' overall well-being (Kuo et al., 2021).

Recent findings also indicate that nostalgia functions as a restorative emotional mechanism, allowing individuals to integrate past and present identities and achieve psychological balance during travel (Batcho, 2020). Therefore, nostalgic proneness is expected to serve as a significant psychological antecedent of tourists' well-being by enriching affective experiences and fostering meaningful reflection.

H2: Nostalgic proneness has a positive influence on tourists' well-being.

Conceptual Framework

Drawing on the reviewed literature, this study proposes an integrative framework linking place attachment and nostalgic proneness to tourists' overall well-being. Place attachment reflects tourists' functional and emotional bonds with destinations (Williams et al., 1992; Prayag et al., 2017), while nostalgic proneness captures their tendency to reexperience emotional memories of the past. At heritage sites such as Sanxia Old Street, nostalgia and place attachment often co-occur, reinforcing visitors' sense of belonging and meaning. Although both constructs have been widely examined, few studies have explored their combined influence on well-being, particularly in East Asian cultural heritage contexts, where emotional connection to place and cultural memory play a central role in the tourist experience.

Accordingly, this study conceptualizes nostalgia as a psychological bridge that may transform place attachment into positive emotional reflection and well-being (Batcho, 2020). This framework therefore hypothesizes that both place attachment and nostalgic proneness exert positive effects on tourists' well-being, as illustrated in Figure 1.

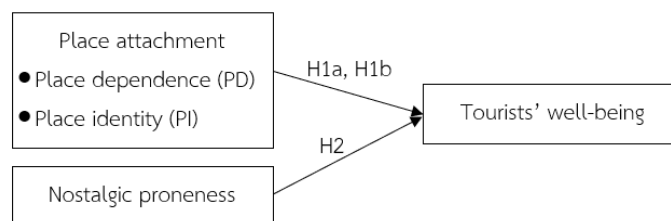


Figure 1 Conceptual framework of the study

Research Methodology

Population and Sample

The target population comprised domestic tourists visiting Sanxia Old Street in New Taipei City, Taiwan. As the exact number of visitors was unavailable, the population size was treated as unknown. A total of 401 questionnaires were distributed online and on-site using non-probability convenience sampling, yielding 386 valid responses for analysis. The sample size exceeded Roscoe's (1975) recommendation and met the minimum requirement for regression analysis (Hair et al., 2019). Although convenience sampling was practical, it may have introduced sampling bias, as repeat or more accessible visitors could have been overrepresented. To improve representativeness, future studies could adopt time-based or stratified sampling across different periods.

All respondents were informed of the study's objectives and provided voluntary informed consent before participation. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained throughout data collection, in accordance with ethical research standards. As all variables were measured



through self-administered questionnaires, potential common method bias was minimized through procedural remedies such as ensuring anonymity and randomizing item order (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The final sample primarily consisted of middle-income, older domestic tourists, consistent with the demographic characteristics reported in the results.

Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire was developed based on validated scales in tourism and psychology to measure the main constructs of the study. The instrument consisted of four sections: (1) demographic information, including gender, age, education, occupation, income, and travel experience; (2) Place Attachment, comprising two subdimensions—Place Dependence and Place Identity—each measured with four items adapted from Williams and Roggenbuck (1989) and Kyle et al. (2004); (3) Nostalgic Proneness, measured with four items adapted from Routledge et al. (2006) and Muehling and Pascal (2012); and (4) Tourist Well-being, assessed using nine items from Ryan and Deci (2001) and Filep and Deery (2010). All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Minor wording adjustments were made to ensure clarity and cultural relevance for Taiwanese respondents visiting Sanxia Old Street. Content validity was evaluated by five academic experts using the item-objective congruence (IOC) method, with all items scoring above 0.60.

A pilot test with 30 participants confirmed the clarity and comprehensibility of all items. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and all constructs exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), indicating strong internal consistency: Place Dependence ($\alpha = 0.896$), Place Identity ($\alpha = 0.946$), Nostalgic Proneness ($\alpha = 0.742$), and Tourist Well-being ($\alpha = 0.903$). These results demonstrate that each construct reliably measured its intended latent variable. Overall, the instrument was judged to be valid, reliable, and appropriate for subsequent statistical analyses.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through an online survey conducted between February and March 2024. The questionnaire was distributed via social media platforms, tourism-related community groups, and local travel networks, targeting domestic tourists who had previously visited Sanxia Old Street in New Taipei City, Taiwan. Participation was voluntary, and all respondents provided informed consent before completing the survey. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained, and no personally identifiable information was collected. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 30, employing descriptive statistics to summarize respondents' demographic and travel characteristics, Pearson's correlation to examine relationships among variables, and



multiple regression analysis to test the hypothesized effects of place attachment and nostalgic proneness on tourist well-being, using a 0.05 significance level.

Results

Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

A total of 386 valid responses were obtained from domestic tourists who had visited Sanxia Old Street. Most respondents were male (63.0%), and the largest age group was 56–60 years (26.7%), followed by 61–65 (17.6%) and 66 years or above (22.5%), indicating that older adults represented the main visitor segment. Nearly three-quarters were married (73.8%) and well-educated, with 44.6% holding a bachelor's degree and 29.0% a postgraduate degree. The majority worked in the service sector (31.6%) or were retired (25.1%), and 72.0% resided in northern Taiwan, reflecting the destination's accessibility to local residents. In terms of travel patterns, more than half (53.1%) had visited the site more than four times, 87.8% stayed for one day, and most traveled by private car (70.7%), accompanied by a spouse or partner (46.9%) or friends (36.8%).

Respondents' Travel Characteristics

More than half of the participants (53.1%) had visited Sanxia Old Street more than four times, suggesting a high proportion of repeat visitors. Most respondents (87.8%) stayed for only one day, and half (50.0%) had not visited the site for more than one year.

The majority used private cars (70.7%) as their primary mode of transportation, followed by public transport (11.7%) and tourist coaches (9.6%). Nearly half of the tourists traveled with a spouse or partner (46.9%), and another 36.8% traveled with friends. In terms of income, most respondents earned between 50,001 and 70,000 NTD (31.3%), followed by 30,001–50,000 NTD (27.2%). These findings highlight that Sanxia Old Street primarily attracts middle-income, repeat domestic visitors who prefer short leisure trips.

Descriptive Statistics of Constructs Related to Tourists' Well-being at Sanxia Old Street

Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation values for all variables. All constructs were rated between moderate and high levels of agreement. For interpretation, mean scores of 1.00–2.59 were considered low, 2.60–3.39 moderate, and 3.40–5.00 high agreement. Among the constructs, Nostalgic Proneness ($\bar{x} = 3.52$) and Place Dependence ($\bar{x} = 3.44$) showed high agreement, while Place Identity ($\bar{x} = 3.22$) indicated moderate agreement. Tourist Well-being ($\bar{x} = 3.51$, S.D. = 0.54) displayed low variability, suggesting consistent and positive perceptions among respondents. These descriptive findings provided the empirical foundation for subsequent correlation and regression analyses.

**Table 1** Presents the descriptive statistics of the main constructs. (n = 386)

Construct	Subdimension	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Interpretation
Place Attachment	Place Dependence	3.44	0.76	High Agreement
	Place Identity	3.22	0.84	Moderate Agreement
Nostalgic Proneness	-	3.52	0.70	High Agreement
Tourist Well-being	-	3.51	0.54	High Agreement

Analysis of Relationships among Place Attachment Dimensions, Nostalgic Proneness, and Tourists' Well-being

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients among the four main constructs. All relationships were positive and statistically significant at the 0.01 level ($p < .01$). Place dependence exhibited the strongest correlation with tourist well-being ($r = .859$), followed by place identity ($r = .766$) and nostalgic proneness ($r = .654$). These findings indicate that both functional and emotional attachment, together with nostalgic tendencies, are positively associated with tourists' well-being at Sanxia Old Street. The high intercorrelation between place dependence and place identity ($r = .840$) suggests that these constructs share conceptual similarity, though subsequent regression diagnostics confirmed no multicollinearity issues ($VIF < 5$).

The demographic profile of respondents helps contextualize these relationships. As most participants were older adults and repeat visitors, they are likely to have developed stronger emotional bonds and personal memories related to the destination. This pattern aligns with the higher mean scores of place dependence and nostalgic proneness, suggesting that long-term familiarity and cultural resonance contribute to enhanced well-being among domestic tourists.

Table 2 Pearson's Correlation Coefficients among the Constructs (n = 386)

Variable	Place Dependence	Place Identity	Nostalgic Proneness	Tourist Well-being
Place Dependence	1			
Place Identity	.840**	1		
Nostalgic Proneness	.649**	.653**	1	
Tourist Well-being	.859**	.766**	.654**	1

Note. $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

Multiple Regression Analysis of Predictors of Tourist Well-being

A multiple regression analysis was performed to examine the predictive influence of *place dependence*, *place identity*, and *nostalgic proneness* on *tourist well-being*. The overall model

was statistically significant ($F(3, 382) = 395.21, p < .001$), explaining 75.6% of the variance in *tourist well-being* ($R^2 = .756$, Adjusted $R^2 = .754$).

Among the predictors, *place dependence* ($\beta = .681, p < .001$) exerted the strongest effect, followed by *nostalgic proneness* ($\beta = .150, p < .001$) and *place identity* ($\beta = .096, p = .047$). All variance inflation factor (VIF) values were below 5, confirming that multicollinearity was not a concern.

Table 3 presents the results of the regression model, which shows that the independent variables jointly explain a substantial proportion of the variance in tourist well-being. The high explanatory power of the model indicates a strong overall predictive capacity. Diagnostic checks for normality and residuals were satisfactory, suggesting that regression assumptions were met. Minor conceptual overlap between *place dependence* and *place identity* is acknowledged but does not affect the robustness of the findings.

Table 3 Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Tourists' Well-being (n = 386)

Predictor	B	S.E.	β (Beta)	t	Sig.	VIF
(Constant)	0.862	0.096	–	9.023	.000	–
Place Dependence	0.550	0.039	0.681	14.164	.000	3.621
Place Identity	0.066	0.033	0.096	1.997	.047	3.653
Nostalgic Proneness	0.153	0.035	0.150	4.350	.000	1.853

Model summary: $R = .870, R^2 = .756$, Adjusted $R^2 = .754, F(3, 382) = 395.21, p < .001$.

Note. All VIF < 5, indicating no multicollinearity concern.

The findings empirically support all three hypotheses ($H1a, H1b$, and $H2$). Specifically, *place dependence* had the strongest positive influence on *tourist well-being*, suggesting that tourists who perceive Sanxia Old Street as functionally valuable and supportive of their travel activities report higher well-being.

Although place identity showed a weaker yet significant effect, it indicates that emotional and symbolic identification with the destination also enhances well-being. Furthermore, nostalgic proneness positively predicted well-being, implying that evoking fond memories and a sense of shared heritage contributes meaningfully to tourists' positive psychological outcomes.

Unstandardized coefficients (b):

$$Y = 0.862 + 0.550(\text{Place Dependence}) + 0.066(\text{Place Identity}) + 0.153(\text{Nostalgic Proneness})$$

Standardized coefficients (β):

$$Z = 0.681(\text{Place Dependence}) + 0.096(\text{Place Identity}) + 0.150(\text{Nostalgic Proneness})$$

The unstandardized equation indicates that when place dependence, place identity, and nostalgic proneness each increase by one unit, tourist well-being increases by 0.550, 0.066, and 0.153 units, respectively. The standardized coefficients confirm that place dependence contributes the most to tourist well-being, followed by nostalgic proneness and place identity.

Overall, the results support all proposed hypotheses, confirming that both functional and emotional bonds—as well as nostalgic tendencies—enhance tourists' well-being.

Table 4 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	β (B coefficient)	p-value	Result
H1a: Place dependence has a positive influence on tourists' well-being.	0.681	< .001	Supported
Hb: Place identity has a positive influence on tourists' well-being.	0.096	.047	Supported
H2: Nostalgic proneness has a positive influence on tourists' well-being.	0.150	< .001	Supported

Discussion

The results indicate that place dependence exerts the strongest positive influence on tourist well-being, emphasizing the functional role of destinations in fulfilling both practical and psychological needs. When tourists perceive Sanxia Old Street as convenient, accessible, and supportive of their leisure goals, their sense of autonomy and emotional comfort increases—consistent with the principles of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2001). This finding aligns with Kyle et al. (2004) and Ramkissoon (2015), who emphasized that functional engagement with a place enhances perceived competence and satisfaction.

In the context of a cultural heritage destination, however, functional dependence extends beyond physical amenities or convenience. At sites such as Sanxia Old Street, functionality is expressed through the authentic delivery of cultural and historical experiences—for instance, the preservation of traditional architecture, local craftsmanship, and nostalgic atmosphere. When these cultural functions are effectively maintained, tourists derive both hedonic pleasure (enjoyment and relaxation) and eudaimonic fulfillment (meaning and self-connection), leading to deeper psychological well-being (Filep & Deery, 2010). This may explain why *place dependence* exerts a stronger influence than *place identity* in Taiwan's domestic tourism context, where tourists—many of whom are older adults on short leisure trips—tend to value tangible, culturally rooted, and emotionally comforting experiences. Similar patterns have been observed in heritage



tourism research across East Asia, including Japan and Korea, where familiarity and functional authenticity contribute strongly to well-being (Lee et al., 2020; Wei et al., 2024). Collectively, these findings highlight that functional reliance on a culturally rich heritage site not only facilitates activity satisfaction but also sustains emotional vitality and holistic well-being.

The study found that place identity had a positive but weaker effect on tourist well-being, emphasizing its emotional and symbolic nature. While functional attachment (place dependence) strongly enhances satisfaction through convenience and utility, emotional identification reflects a deeper, eudaimonic sense of meaning and belonging. This weaker influence may be explained by the cultural behavior of Taiwanese domestic tourists, who often view heritage sites like Sanxia Old Street as short-term leisure destinations rather than extensions of personal identity. Nevertheless, when visitors perceive the site as culturally and personally significant, emotional connection still enhances eudaimonic well-being through cultural pride and memory continuity (Williams & Vaske, 2003; Prayag et al., 2017; Jiang et al., 2022). Thus, place identity serves as a subtler but meaningful psychological pathway linking emotional attachment to long-term well-being.

Nostalgic proneness was found to significantly enhance tourists' well-being by transforming their visits into emotionally meaningful and restorative experiences. Visitors who felt nostalgic while exploring Sanxia Old Street experienced comfort, belonging, and continuity, promoting both hedonic pleasure and eudaimonic fulfillment. This emotional effect appears to stem primarily from historical nostalgia rather than personal nostalgia, as the site evokes collective memories of Taiwan's traditional architecture, crafts, and community life rather than individual recollections. Such experiences enable tourists to connect with the nation's cultural past and reaffirm their identity through shared heritage. By contrast, personal nostalgia—such as memories of earlier family visits—may play a supplementary role among repeat visitors. These findings support Muehling and Pascal (2012) and Routledge et al. (2011), who view nostalgia as a psychological resource fostering meaning and stability. Thus, at heritage destinations like Sanxia Old Street, nostalgic engagement deepens emotional connection and strengthens psychological well-being by linking visitors' present experiences to both personal and collective cultural memories.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of place dependence, place identity, and nostalgic proneness on tourists' well-being within the heritage context of Sanxia Old Street. The findings demonstrate that all three predictors significantly and positively affect tourists' psychological well-being, with place dependence emerging as the strongest determinant. This highlights the pivotal role of functional attachment—how destinations fulfill visitors' practical and experiential





needs—in shaping well-being outcomes. Meanwhile, place identity and nostalgic proneness contribute to emotional restoration, belonging, and life satisfaction, confirming that heritage tourism is both a functional and affective experience. Overall, this study extends existing theories of place attachment and self-determination by integrating nostalgia into the well-being framework, illustrating how cultural heritage environments jointly promote hedonic and eudaimonic well-being.

Policy Implications and Future Research Directions

Policy Implications

From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that destination planners should enhance tourists' functional dependence by improving accessibility, comfort, and the usability of heritage spaces while preserving cultural authenticity. Strengthening place identity can be achieved through interpretive storytelling, community-based heritage events, and local cultural performances that foster emotional connections between visitors and place. In addition, managers could incorporate digital tools, such as augmented reality or virtual storytelling, to evoke historical nostalgia and enrich visitor experiences. Marketing strategies that evoke nostalgic emotions—such as retro-themed festivals or memory-based branding—can deepen affective engagement and encourage repeat visitation. These strategies not only enhance psychological well-being but also support sustainable heritage management by reinforcing both visitor and community pride.

Future Research Directions

Future research should employ longitudinal and cross-cultural designs to examine the causal and contextual dynamics between place attachment and well-being over time. Comparative studies could explore differences between tourists from Taiwan, mainland China, Japan, and Western countries to understand how cultural background shapes nostalgia and authenticity perceptions. Integrating mediating mechanisms such as restorative experience, emotional regulation, and cultural identity could provide deeper insights into how destination attachment fosters psychological outcomes. Moreover, future work could investigate how perceived authenticity influences tourist well-being and how technological mediation—such as AR or virtual tours—transforms nostalgic experiences. Finally, studies involving residents are encouraged to explore community well-being as part of sustainable heritage tourism.

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