

## PLACE ATTACHMENT IN SUN AND SAND DESTINATIONS

**Abstract:** This article analyzes the generation of place attachment between tourists and a sun and sand holiday destination, the Balearic Islands. This bond has been generated through regular contact with the destination, familiarity as a result of prior visits, a family tradition of visiting the Balearics, and positive past experience. Tourists with emotional ties with holiday destination rate the overall experience and express intention to revisit the destination significantly higher than others. The outcome of this survey leads us to understand the importance of symbolic and emotional meaning of the destination when managing and promoting it.

**Keywords:** place attachment, sun and sand destinations, destination loyalty, repeat tourist, satisfaction.

## INTRODUCTION

Place attachment can be defined as emotional ties between people and specific places. It is a process in which a certain place gradually acquires a deep significance for a person over the course of time (Buttimer, 1980; Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001; Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1974, 1980).

Studies of relations between people and specific places have been made for decades in different fields (geography, psychology, economics etc). In tourism, research shows that a bond can develop between tourists and holiday destinations (Briecker & Kerstetter, 2000; Fredman & Heberlein, 2005; Hailu, Boxall & McFarlane, 2005; Hwang, Lee & Chen, 2005; Kyle, Absher & Graefe, 2003; Kyle, Graefe, Manning & Bacon, 2003; Kyle, Graefe, Manning & Bacon, 2004; Lee, 2001; Moore & Graefe, 1994; Vaske & Kobrin, 2001; Warzecha & Lime, 2001; Williams & Vaske, 2003; Williams, Patterson & Roggenbuck, 1992; Yüksel, Yüksel & Bilim, 2009). This bond is connected with tourists' reliance on a holiday resort to carry out a specific leisure activity, be it related to sport, relaxation or other activities. It can also be generated through a sense of symbolic or emotional identification with a place. This sense of attachment is possible thanks to contact with a place over the course of time.

Nonetheless, the generation of a feeling of attachment to a destination is not automatic, since it depends on the personal history of each person and the place they visit. Factors like the number of visits there, the characteristics of the place, and satisfaction with a trip all have a positive influence on the development of a sense of place attachment (Fredman & Heberlein, 2005; Gitelson & Crompton, 1984; Kyle et al., 2003a; Lee & Allen, 1999). Normally, this attachment is generated toward destinations that are considered unique (a special city, for instance), ones that are easily accessible from the tourist's place of residence and thus easy to find, and even toward places where a specific leisure activity can be carried out (like mountains sports). In contrast, it has been claimed that, when different places all offer a similar product, the bond between tourists and this kind of destination will be weaker (Gross & Brown, 2006).

Research on place attachment also highlights as one of the most important consequences of this phenomenon for tourists an increased tendency to revisit the

destination. An emotional bond with a place has a direct impact on the demand function for trips to a certain place (Hailu et al. (2005). According to this literature, the existence of place attachment plays an important role in motivating repeat visits to a destination (Fredman & Heberlein, 2005; Gitelson & Crompton, 1984; Kyle et al., 2003a; Lee & Allen, 1999; Yüksel et al., 2009). Even so, some authors sustain that place attachment is one of the key factors in defining strategies aimed at boosting the competitiveness of tourist destinations and allowing them to improve their position in relation to their rivals (Fyall et al., 2003): visitors with place attachment show a different behaviour pattern from other travellers, particularly in terms of a greater intention to return (Fredman & Heberlein, 2005; Hailu et al., 2005).

A deeper awareness of this tourist segment could be of great interest to decision-makers at destinations, especially in sun and sand ones, often thought as interchangeable by tourism studies: sun and sand destinations are considered to be fairly inter-replaceable because the activities there are also available at many other destinations (Buhalis, 2000; Mangion et al., 2005). According to literature on place attachment, the existence of numerous places with a similar holiday product can mean that tourists have a weaker sense of place attachment to these destinations.

This paper discusses the generation of a sense of place attachment between tourists and a sun and sand holiday destination, the Balearic Islands: a mature destination for mass tourism with a high number of repeaters. To carry out this study, a survey was conducted in order to measure the level of place attachment of repeaters to the Balearic Islands, the antecedents, and behaviour pattern of these tourists.

## PLACE ATTACHMENT: ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES

Place attachment can be defined as an emotional bond between people and certain places (Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001). The concept of *topophilia* or the idea of being in love with a place was coined by Tuan (1974) to refer to a process whereby a specific place gradually takes on a deep meaning for someone over the course of the years. Thanks to this bond, human beings develop a feeling of belonging to a place that gives their life meaning (Buttimer, 1980; Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1980). A similar phenomenon occurs with emotional ties that develop between people, be they family or friends (Moore & Graefe, 1994; Tuan, 1974, 1980). Research has demonstrated that the relationship between individuals and specific places (other than their place of residence)

is important in their personal development and in what they are like as a person (Manzo, 2003, p. 57). On occasions, feelings for a place can be subconscious (Hester, 1993): it can be an involuntary fondness of which we are not entirely aware (Manzo, 2003, p. 53).

An interest in studying human beings' links with a place has been shown in various different disciplines (Williams & Vaske, 2003), including geography with the concept of a "sense of place" (Buttimer & Seamon, 1980; Relph, 1976, 1997; Tuan, 1977, 1980) or environmental psychology (Altman & Low, 1992; Brown, 1987). Within the field of tourism, study of place attachment began to be applied in the 1980s (Hwang, Lee & Chen 2005, p. 146), referring to positive connections or links between tourists and destinations (Williams & Vaske, 2003). Numerous studies have demonstrated cases where tourists have developed emotional ties to a place they visit during their holidays (Briecker & Kerstetter, 2000; Fredman & Heberlein, 2005; Hailu et al., 2005; Hwang et al., 2005; Kyle et al., 2003a; Kyle et al., 2003b; Kyle et al., 2004; Lee, 2001; Moore & Graefe, 1994; Vaske & Kobrin, 2001; Warzecha & Lime, 2001; Williams & Vaske, 2003; Williams et al., 1992). What is more, these studies tend to confirm the existence of two dimensions to place attachment: place dependence and place identity (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Williams et al., 1992).

Place dependence is a functional bond with a place fostered by an ability to carry out a specific leisure activity there (Hailu et al., 2005, p. 583). This dependence is reliant on the place having certain physical characteristics that are needed to achieve certain leisure-related goals (Stokols & Shumaker, 1981), for example the existence of mountains for hiking or presence of rivers or a coastline for water sports. When the tourist' main objective is a certain activity, the place is assessed in terms of its function (Hailu et al., 2005; Williams & Vaske, 2003). This type of bond can be formed anywhere that the desired activity is available (Williams & Vaske, 2003). Place identity is an emotional bond between an individual and a place visited for leisure purposes (Hailu et al., 2005, p. 583). This dimension reflects the symbolic importance of a place as a focus of emotions and relations that give meaning to life (Williams & Vaske, 2003, p. 831). This emotional bond with a place is a component of the individual's personal identity (Hailu et al., 2005; Proshansky, Fabian & Raminoff, 1983) and it grows stronger through contact with a place over the years (Giuliani & Feldman, 1993).

Numerous authors have examined how an emotional bond is formed between tourists and destinations. There are three main factors that influence its development:

*Prior experience at the destination.* This is one of the most important pre-requisites. Prior links with a destination are determined by the number of former visits there (Eisenhauer, Krannich & Blahna, 2000; Lee, 2001; Moore & Graefe, 1994; Vorkin & Riese, 2001; Williams et al., 1992); the intensity of these trips (the number of days' stay) (Mitchell, Force, Carroll & McLaughlin, 1993; Vorkin & Riese, 2001); the age when they occurred (travelling with the family as a child has a positive influence on the development of place attachment) (Lee, 2001; Lee & Allen, 1999); the level of familiarity with the destination (Lee, 2001; Williams, 1992); and satisfaction with prior visits (Bloemer & de Ruyter, 1999; Lee, 2001). All these factors contribute positively to the development of an emotional bond between a person and a place. In short, a tourist who has visited a destination on several occasions, who has travelled there since childhood with the family, or who has been satisfied with previous visits there will be more likely to develop place attachment.

*The characteristics of the destination.* Every destination has a predominant set of characteristics, depending on its type (urban, mountain, sun and sand, etc.) (Buhalis, 2000). Crouch & Ritchie (1999) call these attributes the destination's "core resources". These characteristics also influence the generation of place attachment. As seen above, one dimension of place attachment is the formation of a functional bond: that is, to what extent a destination can offer the necessary facilities for a certain intended activity. Studies by Fredman & Heberlein (2005) and Lee (2001) show that one of the main antecedents of place attachment is the pull factor of the destination's attributes: that is, the existence of amenities that are not available in the tourist's normal place of residence, facilitating enjoyment of a certain activity that is not possible at home.

*Tourist involvement.* This concept is defined as an unobservable state of motivation, emotion or interest in a leisure activity or associated product (Havitz & Dimanche, 1997; Rothschild, 1984). A tourist's more active involvement in an activity or destination means that, first of all, the place or activity are more important in his / her life and, second, that the he / she develops a greater sensitivity and engagement to the suppliers of the activity and/or place where it happens (Gahwiler & Havitz, 1998; Havitz & Dimanche, 1990, 1999; McIntyre & Pigram, 1992). Research has shown that there is a positive connection between tourist involvement and place attachment (Bricker & Kerstetter, 2000; Kyle et al., 2003a; McFarlane et al., 1998; Moore & Graefe, 1994; Williams et al., 1992). In short, the main variables associated with place

attachment include past experience with the destination, the characteristics of the place, and the tourist's level of involvement and motivation.

*The consequences of place attachment for the destination*

The antecedents of place attachment have been extensively analyzed in literature and the results are, in general, accepted and tend to coincide. In contrast, studies of the effects of place attachment have not been so exhaustive and their conclusions are not as solid as studies of its antecedents. Despite this, research highlights the five following consequences: *Greater tourist involvement*. The stronger the place attachment, the more actively the tourist becomes involved with the destination (Bricker & Kersteetter, 2000; Hwang et al., 2005). In the previous section, one of the antecedents of place attachment was considered to be the tourist's level of involvement, but it has been demonstrated that *tourist involvement* is not just a pre-requisite of place attachment but also a possible consequence.

*An increasing tendency to revisit the place*. Positive connections with a place and/or the possibility of carrying out a specific activity there motivates people to go back there again. Fredman & Heberlein (2005) claim that the existence of place attachment plays an important role in motivating repeat visits to a destination, overcoming any limitations or difficulties that consumers might face. Hailu et al. (2005) observe that an emotional bond with a place (together with the number of prior visits) has a direct impact on the demand function for trips to a certain place. Likewise, Gitelson & Crompton (1984), Kyle et al. (2003a); Lee & Allen (1999) and Yüksel et al. (2009) state that repeat visits to a destination are not just based on satisfaction with previous trips there, but also on the existence of an emotional bond with the place.

*Increased satisfaction during trips*. The existence of place attachment has a positive significant influence on tourists' level of satisfaction with services at a destination (Hwang et al., 2005; Yüksel et al., 2009).

*A willingness to pay more*. This is one of the consequences where direct proven empirical evidence is harder to find. Studies of this effect have given contradictory results. Williams et al. (1999) found that more experienced tourist who were more familiar with a destination – and who, by extension, tended to have stronger ties – were less willing to pay more. In contrast, Kyle et al. (2003b) observed that tourists with a place identity are more receptive to paying a nature protection tax, while those with a

place dependence are also willing to pay a tax but one that is aimed at developing facilities and infrastructure at the destination. In short, according to this research, there is a positive relationship between the types of place attachment and a willingness to pay some kind of tax or surcharge.

Notwithstanding all this, all these studies are only based on interviews with tourists about their hypothetical attitudes. On the other hand, Alegre & Juaneda (2006) observe that tourists on repeat visits to the same part of the destination have a significantly higher expenditure during their holiday in relation to first-timers there. Higher expenditure might be associated with a willingness to pay more (if it is assumed that a stay in the same area implies place attachment) or else returning to the same area might reduce the non-monetary risks and costs of tourism and so they can afford to increase their spending to ensure better quality services. Despite this, the study cannot confirm either of these hypotheses. In synthesis, although there are possible indications, no clear relationship has been established in literature between emotional attachment and a willingness to pay more.

*A greater sensitivity to environmental impacts at the destination.* Some studies demonstrate the existence of a relationship between place attachment and, firstly, a greater sensitivity to impacts on resources there (Young et al., 1991) and, secondly, a more responsible behavior toward the natural environment (Vaske & Kobrin, 2001). Furthermore, as indicated previously, a positive relationship is established between place attachment (place identity) and a willingness to pay levies or taxes for the protection of natural resources and for environmental education. Literature also suggests that tourists who express attachment to a place are inclined to have a better awareness of resources at the destination, to take more care, and to assume an active role in the management of the place (Schreyer, Lime & Williams, 1984; Wellman, Roggenbuck & Smith, 1982). Lastly, it is also claimed that the stronger the place attachment (place identity), the greater the tendency to experience a sensation of too many people and congestion at the holiday destination (Kyle et al., 2004): those with attachment to a destination are more aware than the rest when there are too many people there. In summary, the different analyses point to place attachment being associated with a greater sensitivity and demand for environmental quality at a destination.

Consequently, research indicates that place attachment can lead to greater involvement/motivation on the part of the tourist; a propensity for repeat visits; increased satisfaction during the trip; a willingness to pay more; and greater sensitivity

to the environmental impacts that the destination might suffer from. If these effects are confirmed, the existence of a segment characterized by place attachment could be considered a phenomenon with positive effects for the destination and one of its strengths. Creating and maintaining a network aimed at fostering contact between individual consumers and destinations and mutual relations between them (“relationship marketing”) (Fyall, Callod & Edwards, 2003) could be a tool in helping the said destinations achieve a greater competitive edge: fostering attachment to an enterprise by clients might be useful in defending it from rival businesses (Wernerfelt, 1991).

### *Studies of place attachment at tourist destinations*

Literature highlights that research into and an awareness of place attachment can help improve the management of tourist destinations (Greene, 1996). The possible positive consequences of this phenomenon have encouraged research in this field. Studies have been made of numerous types of places: mountain destinations (Fredman & Heberlein, 2005; Kyle et al., 2003a; Kyle et al., 2003b; Kyle et al., 2004), cities (Lee, 2001), rivers (Briecker & Kerstetter, 2000), and natural parks and woodlands (Hailu et al., 2005; Hwang et al., 2005; Warzecha & Lime 2001; Williams & Vaske, 2003). Nonetheless, their direct application to sun and sand destinations has been more limited (Lee, 2001; Yuksel et al., 2009) or the issue is only analyzed in a partial way (Alegre & Juaneda, 2006).

Sun and sand holidays are one of the most popular forms of tourism. Since the early days of mass tourism, citizens from northern countries have travelled to warmer climates in their holidays (Buhalis, 2000). During these visits, the tourists take advantage of the physical characteristics of these places to carry out activities that they cannot do in their usual place of residence (place dependence). The main motivations in visiting this kind of destination are the climate, beaches, landscape etc. (Aguiló et al., 2005; Alegre & Cladera, 2006; Campo, Garau & Martínez, 2009; Encuesta del Gasto Turístico en Canarias, 2004; Kozak, 2001; Mangion et al., 2005; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). At the same time, the places that offer this kind of holiday are considered to be fairly interchangeable because the (sun and sand) activities there are also available at many other destinations (Buhalis, 2000; Mangion et al., 2005). The existence of numerous places with a similar holiday product can mean that tourists have a weaker place attachment to these destinations (Gross & Brown, 2006, p. 699).



Nonetheless, this statement can be qualified. Moore & Graefe (1994) observe the influence of place dependence on place identity. What they term the *model of place attachment formation* functions as follows: as the number of visits to a place rises, fewer substitutes or alternatives are seen as existing for the place in question. Consequently, individuals become dependent on the place for a specific leisure activity (a sun and sand holiday in this case). When people become dependent on a place, they visit it often and this facilitates the development of an emotional or symbolic attachment to the destination. In short, place dependence ends up by influencing their identification with the place. As a result, it is important to know whether, at sun and sand destinations, repeat visits and/or satisfaction with prior trips have been able to generate an emotional bond with the place. If this is confirmed, the consequences for destinations should be identified.

### *Study Methods*

To demonstrate the possible existence of place attachment by tourists to a sun and sand destination, the case of the Balearic Islands was studied. This is a mature mass tourism destination that has marketed its product on international markets (mainly Britain and Germany) for over four decades and a leading Mediterranean sun and sand destination (Aguiló et al., 2005). The Balearic Islands are characterized by a high number of repeaters (67% in 2003), with a large percentage that have visited the destination on four or more occasions (34%) (Alegre & Cladera, 2006; Alegre & Juaneda, 2006). This phenomenon has led some studies to point to the possible existence of a tourist segment with place attachment (Alegre & Cladera, 2006; Alegre & Juaneda, 2006), although the issue has never been directly analysed. Specifically, this research study aims to test, first of all, the possible existence of a tourist segment with positive connections to one example of a sun and sand destination. Secondly, examine the antecedents of this possible place attachment. Finally, analyze the consequences of the phenomenon.

*Survey design.* Place attachment can be identified and measured, together with its various degrees and dimensions (Williams & Vaske, 2003). This bond can be evaluated using a *place attachment scale*, which measures two dimensions of place attachment (functional and emotional attachment) (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Moore & Graeffe, 1994; Williams et al., 1992). According to these studies, the degree of place

attachment can be reliably measured by asking tourists to rate eight statements. More specifically, four statements must be rated to measure each of the two dimensions (Williams & Vaske, 2003). In the first case, the statements refer to aspects concerning the function of the place for a specific leisure activity. Normally they are asked to rate statements such as “This destination is the best place to do what I enjoy doing during my holiday” (William & Vaske, 2003). The aim is to analyse the bond that has developed because certain favorite leisure activities can be carried out there.

The most suitable statements were selected by making a review of other research studies (Lee, 2001; Shamai, 1991; Williams et al., 1992) and by conducting a pilot survey at Palma Airport (Balearic Islands) during the month of June 2006. By taking this dual approach, the four most relevant statements could be chosen to study this factor: The Balearics are my favorite holiday destination; I get more satisfaction out of visiting the Balearics than any other destination; The Balearics are the best place to do what I enjoy doing; Nowhere else can compare to the Balearic Islands.

To analyze the level of emotional attachment to the holiday destination, the same methodology was used. In this case, place attachment refers to the emotional, symbolic or experience-based bond that is generated. The statements were designed to explore whether he/she felt “the destination was a part of him” or even whether “what occurs there is important for him”. Thus it is a dimension that alludes to the arousal of positive emotions. The four statements that were used to examine this behavior were: My experience of the Balearics is/has been more than leisure related; I feel that the Balearics are a part of me; I feel very attached to the Balearics; What happens in the Balearics is important for me.

Once the eight items had been chosen, in order to measure the degree of place attachment to the Balearics, a survey was conducted using tourists to the archipelago in the summer of 2006. As well as answering questions referring to their sociodemographic characteristics, the interviewees had to rate their level of agreement with the eight statements, depending on whether they “agreed completely” (=five) or “disagreed completely” (=one), as is typical with this kind of survey (Williams & Vaske, 2003). Furthermore, other questions were asked to analyze the antecedents and consequences of this emotional bond: that is, the number of previous stays, the level of satisfaction, the degree of motivation, and their future intention to return.

*Data-gathering process.* The tourists interviewed for the survey belonged to the three main nationalities that visit the Balearic Islands: Germans, Britons and Spaniards. These three nationalities account for 81% of Mallorca's tourists (Govern de les Illes Balears, 2006). The surveys were conducted in the respondents' native languages at the departure gates of Palma Airport, once the passengers had checked in their baggage and gone through airport security. The survey selection process was random, based on the departure and gate information of all scheduled flights for this period, which was provided by the airport authorities. Moreover, the survey-takers had to follow specific guidelines in selecting tourists at each boarding gate. For each flight, in the waiting room in front the boarding gate, a maximum of three surveys was conducted. They selected them following the same pattern: the tourist located closer to the boarding gate entrance, the tourist located farther, and that was in the middle of these two extremes mentioned. In the end, 2,423 people participated in the survey. Table 1 lists some of the characteristics of the survey respondents.

[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

*The existence of a tourist segment with place attachment: distinctive characteristics*

[INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Table 2 shows the percentage of replies equal to or higher than four (on a Likert scale ranging from one to five) for each of the statements used to measure the degree of emotional and functional attachment. As can be observed, for all the statements, a high number of repeaters (about 30%) showed themselves to be clearly identified with those statements that assess attachment to the destination. Given these results, the existence of a significant segment of tourists with an important place attachment can be confirmed. In order to synthesize the level of attachment, a principal components analysis was performed for all the eight variables. These were summarized into a single principal component, capturing 60.34% of the initial information. Table 3 presents the communalities corresponding to each variable and the correlations of the extracted component.

[INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

In the ‘intention to return model’ that was estimated subsequently, the principal component that synthesizes the degree of place attachment was included as an explanatory variable. Additionally, its categorization into five intervals of equal size (each accounting for approximately 20% of the tourist respondents in this section) was used to differentiate between repeaters with a lower level of attachment (first interval of the variable) and those with a stronger level (last interval). In order to test for the behavior pattern of tourists who have developed place attachment to the Balearic Islands, an analysis was made of their assessments of their degree of motivation in choosing the destination; their ratings of its attributes; their perception of annoying or dissatisfying situations; and their intention to return.

*Motivations for the visit.* Firstly research was conducted into the difference in the motivations of first timers and repeaters to the Balearics (Table 4). Although differences can be observed, they are not numerically high. First-time tourists show a greater motivation than repeaters in nine aspects, while for another seven the opposite occurs. Tourists visiting the Balearics for the first time are more motivated by factors relating to interaction and social relations (the nightlife, relations with other tourists, doing sports, the presence of friends or relatives etc), while for repeaters there is a tendency to be more motivated by basic features of a sun and sand product (the climate, accommodation, cleanliness and hygiene). In contrast, among repeaters, there is practically no difference in motivation between those declaring themselves to have a high place attachment and those who do not.

[INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

*Assessment of the holiday.* Secondly, differences were observed in satisfaction ratings with the destination’s different attributes and with overall satisfaction (Table 5). Repeater show a slight tendency to be more satisfied than new ones in their overall assessment of the holiday experience. Despite this, it is a very subtle difference. In some aspects, first timers’ ratings are even higher than repeaters. It can therefore be said that there is no clear tendency for one segment to be more satisfied with the holiday than the other, neither in their overall assessment nor analysis of each of the destination’s attributes. Nonetheless, among repeaters there is a clear difference in their assessments depending on whether they declare themselves to have a high place attachment or not. These results show a clear tendency for these tourists to be highly satisfied with their holiday.

[INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE]

*Perceptions of dissatisfaction.* In continuation, an analysis was made of the impact of annoying situations that can occur during a holiday (Table 6). As demonstrated in other studies, ratings made using an explicit dissatisfaction-based scale do not reiterate assessments of information provided by a satisfaction-based scale (Alegre & Garau, 2009). Quite the opposite, satisfaction-based ratings provide complementary information. In general terms, the level of dissatisfaction experienced by tourists with a strong place attachment is lower than that of other tourists, both in relation to first timers and repeaters without place attachment. This contradicts other studies (Kyle et al., 2004) that had indicated that tourists with place attachment to a holiday destination were more sensitive toward aspects associated with its environmental quality.

[INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE]

*Repeat visits.* A study was made of the influence of place attachment on the intention to return. As observed in Table 7, tourists with place attachment to the Balearics display a much higher intention to revisit the destination than others. Additionally, it was observed that as place attachment grows, the higher the tendency to repeat a visit to the same area (Table 8).

[INSERT TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE]

[INSERT TABLE 8 ABOUT HERE]

*“Personal sacrifice”.* Although literature usually takes into account two types of attachment to a destination (functional and emotional), during the research study two statements were included that are not normally used to measure the degree of attachment (Table 9). They are questions that can be interpreted as being synonymous with a strong commitment to the destination, which might be considered a third dimension of place attachment. The segment with a stronger attachment – the last interval – identifies strongly with these statements.

[INSERT TABLE 9 ABOUT HERE]

*Antecedents and consequences of place attachment*

To analyze the predictors of tourist attachment to the Balearic Islands, a Linear Regression Model was estimated (Table 10). The dependent variable is the level of attachment measured by the first principal component, while the independent variables are positive prior experience of the destination, the fact that travelling to the Balearics is (or was) a family tradition, and the level of familiarity with the destination. Additionally, the number of prior visits to the Balearics was included as an independent variable (three, four or five). The results show a model of the antecedents of place attachment along the lines of other studies (Lee, 2001, for example). Four of the variables are strong predictors of place attachment, whilst the other two are also useful. In order of importance, the variables most closely associated with place attachment to the Balearics are familiarity with the destination, more than four previous visits, a family tradition of visits, and positive prior experience. These results show that regular contact with a place and familiarity with it are the factors that end up by generating place attachment to the holiday destination.

[INSERT TABLE 10 ABOUT HERE]

*Repeat visitation model.* In order to estimate the impact of place attachment to the destination on the intention to return, a logit model was estimated, with a dependent variable that takes a value of zero if the respondent states not intend to revisit the destination in the next two or three summers and a value of one otherwise. The repeat visitation model establishes a relationship of dependence between the intention to revisit the destination and the degree of place attachment and declared satisfaction or dissatisfaction with different aspects of the destination. Additionally, when the model was initially estimated, some variables that captured the tourists' sociodemographic profiles were included: their country of residence (Germany, the UK, Spain), age, level of education and income. None of these variables, with the exception of the nationality variable, was significant at a 5% level. Consequently, they were excluded from the final estimation of the model.

The satisfaction and dissatisfaction ratings were included in the model by using six and two principal components from the components analysis outlined in the appendix. In the components corresponding to the satisfaction ratings, the first principal component encompasses those attributes that define a basic sun and sand product (i.e. beaches, the climate, scenery, cleanliness and hygiene, safety, accommodation, and

peace and quiet). The second component is primarily associated with features of the destination that are less closely related to a basic sun and sand product, yet which prompt tourists to choose the destination (i.e. visits to historic places, contact with nature, cultural activities, and interesting towns or cities). The third component is more closely linked to variables concerning activities and social interaction (i.e. nightlife, interaction with other tourists, specific leisure/tourist attractions, doing sports, the presence of friends and family), while the fourth component is related to the cuisine, local lifestyle, and prior visits to the destination. The fifth component concerns how easy a choice the destination was (i.e. easy access, facilities for children and/or the elderly, easy access to information and an easy trip to arrange). Finally, the sixth component is associated with price-related aspects (an affordable price for the tourist's budget and whether the destination was seen as inexpensive). The retained components accounts for 52,17% of the total variance.

The dissatisfaction ratings were grouped into two principal components. The first principal component is associated with too much building/the destruction of the landscape, too much development/too commercial, too many people, noise, too much traffic and lack of a natural environment. Thus these variables are tied in with overcrowding at the destination and environmental degradation. The second component is more closely linked to other aspects that can generate dissatisfaction (poor signposting of roads and /or places of interest, a lack of sports facilities and infrastructure, a lack of professionalism or cordiality in services outside the hotel, poor road conditions, problems at the airport, and dirtiness). The retained components accounts for 38.25% of the total variance.

The percentage of correct assignment for the estimated model is 63.6%, with a percentage of 39.4% corresponding to no intention to return in the two or three following summers and 81.2% for a declared intention to return. The Cox and Snell and Nagelkerde  $R^2$  statistics are equal to 0.094 and 0.127 respectively. The Hosmer-Lemeshow test has a significance of 0.802, thus indicating the model's adequate goodness of fit in the different risk intervals. Table 11 shows the estimations of parameters corresponding to the principal components for attachment, satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and the values of the significance tests of the included variables.

[INSERT TABLE 11 ABOUT HERE]

The results show that, of all the components, the one with the highest explanatory capacity for the intention to return corresponds to satisfaction with aspects that form part of a basic sun and sand product (beaches, the climate, landscape etc). At the same time, a high level of satisfaction with the component associated with the local lifestyle, cuisine and prior visits to the destination guarantees a strong likelihood of a return visit. This variable is conditioned by prior experience and familiarity with the place, and it increases the likelihood of a repeat visit. The effect of the component relating to emotional attachment is also significant, albeit to a lesser degree (the greater the attachment to the destination, the stronger the intention to return). The value of this variable confirms the importance that emotional attachment plays in the decision to revisit the destination.

This attachment – which, as seen previously, is generated through habitual contact with the destination, positive prior experience, and a family tradition of visits there – calls for the public authorities and entrepreneurs to strive actively to foster this bond among tourists. It is also important to highlight the influence of negative perceptions (due to situations of congestion, too many tourists, or environmental degradation) on intentions not to revisit the destination. The remaining variables included in the model were not significant; that is, the components related to activities and social interaction, prices, easy access and an easy trip to arrange, the existence of other attributes not associated with a sun and sand product (historic places, cultural activities, contact with nature), and lastly annoying situations caused by other negative aspects (problems at the airport, a lack of signing etc). As for an analysis by nationalities, British tourists display a lower intention to return than Spaniards or Germans.

It is interesting to point out that this estimation was only performed with the segment of the sample corresponding to repeaters. Despite this, the attributes that are most influential in the intention to return are the same ones as those obtained for the whole sample (Alegre & Garau, 2009). The factors that have the highest explanatory capacity on the intention to return are satisfaction with aspects associated with a sun and sand holiday product, satisfaction with the local lifestyle and cuisine, and prior visits to the destination. In contrast, when the sample is limited to repeaters, components like prices, easy access, an easy trip to arrange and social interaction no longer have any explanatory capacity on the intention to return, while emotional attachment to the place as a reason for a repeat visit becomes more important.



## CONCLUSIONS

The development of a sense of place attachment among tourists to a holiday destination is related to their reliance on the destination as a place where they can carry out a specific leisure activity that they cannot do back home. It can also be generated by identifying symbolically or emotionally with the place through contact with it over the course of time. Although the phenomenon has been explored in studies of different places, some research studies have suggested that a strong bond might not be generated at sun and sand destinations because they offer a similar inter-replaceable product.

The initial result of this study demonstrates that a progressive contact relationship between tourists and the Balearic Islands - a mass sun and sand destination present in the international market for over four decades - has generated an important positive connections strong emotional bond with the place by some of its tourists. For these people, despite the existence of other destinations of similar characteristics, it is a unique destination and, to a certain extent, an irreplaceable one. This bond has been generated through regular contact with the destination, familiarity as a result of prior visits, a family tradition of visiting the Balearics, and positive past experience.

Secondly, a need can be inferred for place attachment to be taken into account in research into satisfaction with visits and the intention to return. Repetition is not the result of inertial behavior by tourists (Alegre & Cladera, 2006), but a consequence of positive previous experience and attachment to the destination. Place attachment is a powerful reason for revisiting a place. Research has often focused exclusively on a place's tangible attributes, but in the management of a destination it is also important to bear in mind the importance of its symbolic and emotional significance for tourists. For destinations, the beneficial consequences of this phenomenon are the tourist's tendency to have a better opinion of the destination and a substantial increase in the likelihood of a return visit. Thanks to this loyalty, they are less sensitive to the price component, and campaigns to advertise and promote the destination are less necessary.

Managers must strive to create an emotional bond between a holiday destination and tourists. These efforts can include policies to attract younger tourists – so that they get into the habit of visiting the destination – or offers to attract entire families. Another possibility is to extend loyalty programs or similar schemes that already exist for certain services (frequent flyers and hotel or car hire loyalty schemes etc) to encompass the

whole destination (Fyall et al., 2003; Lee, 2001). In this sense, special attention should be paid to place attachment when designing measures for rehabilitation and restructuring the tourist areas: if one of the strengths of a destination's feeling of identity and encounter with the place that arouses the visitor, may not be suitable radical and profound that impede the repeater recognize anything above and that the new place will not wake up in it souvenirs symbolic. As a result, would become a destination more easily replaceable.

The study has some limitations that emerged and were contemplated during the execution of the research work. They also point toward new fields of research opened up by the study. Firstly, other studies in the field should confirm the presence of positive connections between visitors and sun and sand destinations, as it has been concluded in this investigation: existing literature stresses that the existence of numerous places with a similar holiday product can mean tourist have a weaker place attachment to these destinations (Gross & Brown, 2006). Secondly, it has not observed a greater sensitivity among tourists with a strong sense of place attachment to aspects associated with congestion and over-crowding compared with other tourists. In contrast, some articles have pointed to place attachment being associated with a greater awareness of the destination's environmental situation (Kyle et al., 2003a; Kyle et al., 2004).

In the third place, because data on expenditure was not available, this variable could not be analyzed. However, during the research study it was observed that the stronger the place attachment, the greater the tendency to revisit the same area. In a study by Alegre & Juaneda (2006), it was seen that tourists repeating a holiday in the same place spend significantly more than the rest. Future research could try and clarify whether a stronger sense of place attachment might be associated with a willingness to pay more. On the other hand, our study case couldn't confirm the existence of two dimensions of place attachment. In the principal component analysis (Table 3), the eight variables of place attachment were summarized into a single factor. That is, we couldn't find evidence that place attachment is comprised of two separate dimension, as emphasized by literature (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Williams et al., 1992). A more in-depth study is needed to find out whether place dependence and place identity are two different dimension in the case of sun and sand mass tourism destinations.

Furthermore, given the importance of place attachment for destinations, another aspect to bear in mind in this field is the generation of place attachment. It must be clarified

whether, given the wider choice of holidays on offer and new habits in tourism consumption (Poon, 1993; Urry, 1995), younger travellers do not repeat visits as much as their parents. The new trend to holiday in a wider range of places might reduce the generation of place attachment among younger generations. Lastly, during the study, the group identified as having a strong bond showed a close sense of identification with new parameters defined as “strong personal sacrifice”. Future studies could clarify the implications of this dimension of place attachment.

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**Table 1. Selected characteristics of the respondents**

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>%</b>
German	39.88	No completed education	1.16
British	41.39	Primary school education	3.60
Spanish	18.74	Secondary school education	38.05
Total	100	Non-university higher education	22.12
		University education	31.55
		Unknown/No answer	3.52
		Total	100
<b>Age</b>			
18 – 29	20.45		
30 – 44	34.88	<b>Accommodation</b>	
45 – 59	34.88	Hotel	70.39
60 and over	9.80	Rented apartment/villa	11.00
Total	100	Own apartment/villa	5.34
		Home of friends/relatives	8.55
		Rural tourism	1.78
		Other	2.94
<b>Income</b>		Total	100
No income	8.06		
Less than 12,000 euros	4.50	<b>Package holiday</b>	
12,000 – 21,000	10.55	Yes	68.90
21,000 – 30,000	13.54	No	31.10
30,000 – 39,000	17.76	Total	100
39,000 – 48,000	13.18		
Over 48,000 euros	14.65	<b>Been to the Balearics before</b>	
Unknown/No answer	17.76	Yes	57.80
Total	100	No	42.20
		Total	100

**Table 2. Percentage of repeaters who “agree” or “agree completely” with the statement**

<b>Place <i>DEPENDENCE</i></b>	<b>Percentage of replies with a rating of <math>\geq 4</math></b>
The Balearics are my favorite holiday destination	38.0
I get more satisfaction out of visiting the Balearics than anywhere else	31.5
The Balearics are the best place to do what I enjoy doing	36.1
Nowhere else can compare to the Balearics	19.7
<b>Mean no. of replies for the dimension of place dependence</b>	<b>31.3</b>
<b>Place <i>IDENTITY</i></b>	
My experience of the Balearics is/has been more than leisure related	40.8
I feel the Balearics are a part of me	24.6
I feel very closely attached to the Balearics	29.7
What happens in the Balearics is important for me	27.4
<b>Mean no. of replies for the dimension of place identity</b>	<b>30.6</b>



**Table 3. Principal components analysis of attachment variables. Communalities and correlation coefficients with the first component**

	Communality	Correlation
The Balearics are my favorite holiday destination	.596	.772
I get more satisfaction out of visiting the Balearics than anywhere else	.695	.833
The Balearics are the best place to do what I enjoy doing	.486	.697
Nowhere else can compare to the Balearic Islands	.581	.762
My experience of the Balearics is/has been more than leisure related	.436	.660
I feel the Balearics are a part of me	.739	.860
I feel very closely attached to the Balearics	.739	.860
What happens in the Balearics is important for me	.556	.745

**Table 4. Level of motivation with different aspects of a sun and sand destination**

Motivations	First timer		Repeaters		Low level of attachment		High level of attachment	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Accommodation	<b>4.15</b>	4	<b>4.29</b>	5	4.33	5	4.43	5
Cultural activities	<b>3.30</b>	3	<b>2.83</b>	3	2.71	3	2.70	3
Nightlife	<b>3.46</b>	4	<b>2.95</b>	3	2.94	3	3.07	3
Tourist/leisure attractions	<b>3.26</b>	3	<b>2.76</b>	3	2.84	3	2.76	3
Climate	<b>4.34</b>	5	<b>4.50</b>	5	4.47	5	4.56	5
Local cuisine	<b>3.54</b>	4	<b>3.73</b>	4	3.68	4	3.88	4
Cheaper destination	<b>3.40</b>	4	<b>3.23</b>	3	3.07	3	3.16	3
Contact with nature	<b>3.32</b>	4	<b>2.73</b>	3	2.45	2	2.46	2
Local lifestyle	3.28	3	3.34	3	3.21	3	3.43	4
Easy access	<b>3.73</b>	4	<b>3.87</b>	4	3.93	4	3.92	4
Facilities for children/the elderly	<b>2.94</b>	3	<b>2.80</b>	3	2.99	3	2.73	3
Easy access to information/easy trip to arrange	<b>3.87</b>	4	<b>3.50</b>	4	3.54	4	3.51	4
Cleanliness and hygiene	<b>4.14</b>	4	<b>4.42</b>	5	4.42	5	4.58	5
Landscape	4.39	5	4.32	5	4.28	4	4.39	5
Beaches	4.50	5	4.44	5	4.45	5	4.49	5
Playing sports	3.02	3	2.94	3	<b>2.76</b>	3	<b>3.08</b>	3
Friends and relatives	<b>3.03</b>	3	<b>2.72</b>	3	2.60	3	2.59	2
Familiar destination	<b>2.79</b>	3	<b>3.13</b>	3	<b>2.96</b>	3	<b>3.37</b>	3
Interesting towns/cities	3.63	4	3.65	4	<b>3.48</b>	4	<b>3.75</b>	4
Getting to know other tourists	3.18	3	2.86	3	2.79	3	2.95	3
Safety	4.16	4	4.38	5	4.46	5	4.49	5
Peace and quiet	4.13	4	4.05	4	4.09	4	4.02	4
Fits in with budget	<b>3.77</b>	4	<b>3.97</b>	4	3.98	4	4.16	4
Visiting historic places	<b>3.50</b>	4	<b>3.05</b>	3	2.95	3	2.93	3

N.B: Differences at a 5% significance level are shown in bold, and at a 10% level in italics. Equality tests were performed between the means of first-time and repeaters and between tourists with a low and high sense of place attachment.

**Table 5. Satisfaction with different aspects of the destination**

Satisfaction	First timer		Repeaters		Low level of attachment		High level of attachment	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Accommodation	4.19	4	4.20	4	<b>3.02</b>	4	<b>4.29</b>	4
Cultural activities	<b>3.65</b>	4	<b>3.38</b>	3	<b>3.23</b>	3	<b>3.41</b>	3
Nightlife	<b>3.96</b>	4	<b>3.72</b>	4	<b>3.56</b>	4	<b>3.81</b>	4
Tourist/leisure attractions	<b>3.68</b>	4	<b>3.47</b>	3	<b>3.39</b>	3	<b>3.56</b>	3
Climate	<b>4.36</b>	4	<b>4.47</b>	5	4.41	5	4.51	5
Local cuisine	<b>3.73</b>	4	<b>3.88</b>	4	<b>3.66</b>	4	<b>4.05</b>	4
Cheaper destination	<b>3.78</b>	4	<b>3.64</b>	4	3.50	4	3.58	4
Contact with nature	<b>3.69</b>	4	<b>3.38</b>	3	3.20	3	3.32	3
Local lifestyle	<b>3.58</b>	4	<b>3.68</b>	4	<b>3.48</b>	4	<b>3.89</b>	4
Easy access	4.08	4	4.13	4	4.17	4	4.13	4
Facilities for children/elderly	<b>3.57</b>	3	<b>3.48</b>	3	3.46	3	3.44	3
Easy access to info./trip	<b>4.34</b>	5	<b>4.01</b>	4	3.92	4	3.90	4
Cleanliness and hygiene	4.08	4	4.12	4	3.97	4	4.14	4
Landscape	4.28	4	4.29	4	<b>4.15</b>	4	<b>4.32</b>	5
Beaches	4.39	5	4.34	4	4.25	4	4.36	5
Playing sports	3.42	3	3.39	3	3.33	3	3.45	3
Friends and relatives	3.56	4	3.50	3	3.40	3	3.48	3
Familiar destination	<b>3.41</b>	4	<b>3.87</b>	4	<b>3.72</b>	4	<b>4.03</b>	4
Interesting towns/cities	3.80	4	3.76	4	<b>3.50</b>	4	<b>3.83</b>	4
Getting to know other tourists	<b>3.61</b>	4	<b>3.40</b>	3	3.35	3	3.52	3
Safety	<b>4.16</b>	4	<b>4.26</b>	4	4.20	4	4.32	5
Peace and quiet	<b>4.14</b>	4	<b>3.98</b>	4	<b>3.72</b>	4	<b>3.98</b>	4
Fits in with budget	3.95	4	3.94	4	<b>3.80</b>	4	<b>4.01</b>	4
Visits to historic places	<b>3.66</b>	4	<b>3.44</b>	3	3.27	3	3.41	3
Overall satisfaction	<b>4.20</b>	4	<b>4.27</b>	4	<b>4.06</b>	4	<b>4.42</b>	5

N.B.: Differences at a 5% significance level are shown in bold. Equality tests were performed between the means for first timers and repeaters and between tourists with a high and low sense of place attachment.

**Table 6. Dissatisfaction ratings**

Dissatisfaction	First timers		Repeaters		Low level of place attachment		High level of place attachment	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Too much traffic	<b>1.35</b>	1	<b>1.42</b>	1	<b>1.55</b>	1	<b>1.37</b>	1
State of roads	1.32	1	1.29	1	1.31	1	1.24	1
Too developed/too commercial	1.58	1	1.60	1	1.60	1	1.55	1
Too many buildings	1.71	2	1.72	2	<i>1.70</i>	2	<i>1.57</i>	1
Too many people	1.54	1	1.58	1	<b>1.69</b>	2	<b>1.54</b>	1
Lack of natural environment	<b>1.24</b>	1	<b>1.30</b>	1	1.30	1	1.25	1
Lack of professional service outside hotels	<b>1.14</b>	1	<b>1.21</b>	1	<b>1.28</b>	1	<b>1.16</b>	1
Sporting infrastructure/facilities	<b>1.10</b>	1	<b>1.17</b>	1	1.21	1	1.18	1
Prices (bars etc)	<b>1.66</b>	1	<b>1.56</b>	1	<b>1.61</b>	1	<b>1.43</b>	1
Noise	<b>1.29</b>	1	<b>1.39</b>	1	<b>1.53</b>	1	<b>1.37</b>	1
Problems at airport	<b>1.24</b>	1	<b>1.30</b>	1	<b>1.38</b>	1	<b>1.24</b>	1
Signing on roads	<b>1.14</b>	1	<b>1.21</b>	1	<b>1.29</b>	1	<b>1.15</b>	1
Dirt (beaches, streets)	<b>1.32</b>	1	<b>1.39</b>	1	<b>1.41</b>	1	<b>1.29</b>	1

N.B. Differences at a 5% significance level are shown in bold. Equality tests were performed between the means for first timers and repeaters and between repeaters with a low and high sense of place attachment.

**Table 7. Intention to return to the Balearics**

In the next 2 or 3 years, do you plan to revisit (or is it likely that you will revisit) the Balearic Islands for a holiday?	First timer	Repeaters	Low level of attachment	High level of attachment	Total
Yes	34.5	54.6	48.9	69.2	46.1
No	65.5	45.4	51.1	30.8	53.9

**Table 8. Tendency to revisit the same area**

Percentile group of attachment	Attempts to revisit same area
1	2.19
2	2.84
3	3.31
4	3.44
5	4.02
Total	3.16

**Table 9. Level of attachment and “personal sacrifice”**

Percentile Group of attachment	I am willing to invest my talent and/or time to make the Balearic Islands an even better place.	I would make (or would have made) personal sacrifices to save/protect/preserve the Balearic Islands.
1	1.36	1.52
2	1.97	2.13
3	2.40	2.54
4	2.86	2.89
5	3.39	3.42
Total	2.39	2.50

**Table 10. Antecedents of place attachment to the Balearics**

Model	Non-standardized coefficients		Standardized coeff.	t	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
	B	Stand. Error	Beta			Tolerance	FIV
1. (Constant)	.110	.151		.724	.469		
2. good experience	.171	.036	.133	4.696	.000	.767	1.304
3. family tradition	.257	.027	.271	9.631	.000	.778	1.285
4. familiarity	.415	.034	.386	12.25	.000	.622	1.607
3 prior visits	-.096	.116	-.026	-.832	.405	.633	1.579
4 prior visits	.146	.115	.040	1.267	.205	.626	1.598
5 prior visits or more	.338	.097	.119	3.482	.001	.533	1.875

**Table 11. Estimation of the logit model for repeat visitation to the Balearic Islands**

	<b>B</b>	<b>Stan- dard error</b>	<b>Wald</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Exp(B)</b>
Country of residence			7.284	2	.026	
Germany	-.185	.162	1.304	1	.253	.831
UK	-.796	.298	7.145	1	.008	.451
Attachment	.185	.076	5.884	1	.015	1.204
Sun and sand characteristics	.364	.078	21.61	1	.000	1.439
Historic places, contact with nature, cultural activities.	.088	.074	1.404	1	.236	1.092
Activities and social interaction	-.044	.077	.316	1	.574	.957
Local lifestyle and cuisine and familiarity with the destination.	.294	.079	13.83	1	.000	1.342
Easy destination to choose	.033	.071	.211	1	.646	1.033
Price related aspects	-.019	.075	.065	1	.799	.981
Too much building/destruction. Over- commercialization.	-.269	.078	11.948	1	.001	.764
Other dissatisfactory aspects	-.046	.077	.356	1	.551	.955
Constant	.419	.121	11.98	1	.001	1.520

APPENDIX

**Table 1. Matrix of varimax rotated components for satisfaction-related attributes**

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Beach	.667					
Climate	.629					
Landscape	.602					
Cleanliness & hygiene	.595					
Safety	.592					
Accommodation	.529					
Peace and quiet	.513					
Visiting historic places		.768				
Contact with nature		.692				
Cultural activities		.685				
Interesting towns/cities		.604				
Nightlife			.754			
Getting to know other tourists			.632			
Tourist/leisure attractions			.577			
Doing sports			.462			
Local cuisine				.611		
Familiar destination				.580		
Friends & relatives			.476	.522		
Local lifestyle				.492		
Easy access					.705	
Facilities for children/the elderly					.652	
Easy access to information/an easy trip to arrange					.505	
Fits in with budget						.817
Cheaper destination						.695

N.B.: The total explained variance is 52.17%.

**Table 2. Matrix of varimax rotated components for dissatisfaction-related attributes**

	Component	
	1	2
Too much building	.780	
Too developed/too commercial	.733	
Too many people	.716	
Too much traffic	.501	
Price levels (bars etc)	.491	
Noise	.429	
Signing of roads		.697
Sports infrastructure and facilities		.636
Lack of professional service outside hotels		.634
Problems at airport		.492
State of roads		.434
Dirt (beaches, streets)		.426
Lack of natural environment		

N.B.: The total explained variance is 38.25%.