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Cultural involvement and attitudes toward tourism: Examining serial mediation effects of residents' spiritual wellbeing and place attachment

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on bottom-up spillover theory, this study investigates the effect of cultural involvement on residents' attitudes toward tourism development. The study further examines the underlying mechanism of this impact through spiritual wellbeing and place attachment. Data were collected via an on-site survey from local residents in two famous ancient water villages in China: *Xitang* and *Wuzhen*. Results reveal that the relationship between cultural involvement and attitudes toward tourism development were fully mediated by serial mediation through spiritual wellbeing and place attachment. This study extends understanding of the mechanism behind residents' attitude formation toward tourism development. Managerially, it offers guidance to boost residents' positive attitudes from the angle of cultural involvement.

1. Introduction

Residents' attitudes toward tourism, especially their support for tourism development, have been widely acknowledged as a key planning and policy consideration for the tourism industry's successful management and sustainable operations over the long term (Moghavvemi, Woosnam, Paramanathan, Musa, & Hamzah, 2017; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011; Woo, Kim, & Uysal, 2015). Over the last three decades, close attention has been given to factors that may influence residents' attitudes toward local tourism development; among these, the effects of perceived tourism impacts are of particular interest (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Rasoolimanesh & Jaafar, 2017). Scholars have pointed out that residents tend to support tourism development when they anticipate more positive tourism-related benefits, such as improvements in employment opportunities, living standards, infrastructure and entertainment facilities, and the promotion and preservation of local culture (Deery, Jago, & Fredline, 2012; Gannon, Rasoolimanesh, & Taheri, 2021).

Interestingly, residents may still support local tourism in the face of possible negative consequences (Deery et al., 2012; Ko & Stewart, 2002). Hence, other factors shaping residents' attitudes toward tourism development have garnered growing academic attention. How residents view their wellbeing, and the extent to which they value their

community emotionally, are common topics in this vein (Gannon et al., 2021; Gursoy, Jurowski, & Uysal, 2002; Ko & Stewart, 2002). Studies have indicated that maintaining and enhancing residents' wellbeing is essential to sustainable tourism development (Ivlevs, 2016; Nawijn & Mitas, 2012; Woo et al., 2015); however, most studies have overlooked the effects of cultural characteristics on residents' wellbeing and attitudes (Pan, Xu, Lu, & Gursoy, 2018). This study thus aims to address limitations in earlier literature by examining residents' attitudes toward tourism development from a cultural involvement perspective.

In the consumer behavior literature, "involvement" originally refers to the relevance and importance individuals assign to an object based on their inherent needs, values, and interests (Zaichkowsky, 1985). Involvement also represents a key psychographic construct and has been identified as a major motivational component of individuals' attitudes and behavior (Gao, Lin, & Zhang, 2020). Based on previous definitions of involvement, "cultural involvement" is defined as how relevant and important individuals deem cultural activities and consumption in their daily lives in this study (Campos, Mendes, do Valle, & Scott, 2017; Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003). More specifically, individuals exhibiting greater cultural involvement should be more motivated by, satisfied with, and immersed in culture-related activities and consumptions both emotionally and behaviorally. This study delves into the potential effect of local residents' cultural involvement on their attitudes toward

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tourism development.

We further uncover the mechanism underlying cultural involvement's impact on residents' attitudes toward tourism development by highlighting two serial mediators: spiritual wellbeing and place attachment. Spiritual wellbeing, which represents a novel, timely, but relatively scarcely examined form of wellbeing, refers to individuals' extent of affirmation of four relationships cohere to determine the overall or global deep inner mental state according to the original conceptualization of the construct: that with their inner self (personal); with others (communal); with nature (environmental); and with God, or another form of religious or transcendental cognition (transcendental) (Gomez & Fisher, 2003; Pan et al., 2018). Another important psychological factor, place attachment, refers to residents' emotional connectedness to their physical living place and the meanings associated with that place (Ouyang, Gursoy, & Sharma, 2017).

We ground our argument in bottom-up spillover theory, which suggests that an individual's wellbeing is influenced by their perceptions of an array of life domains and sub-domains (Kim, Uysal, & Sirgy, 2013); in turn, wellbeing affects an individual's feelings and attitudes (Wang, Berbekova, & Uysal, 2020). Cultural involvement is based on the unique culture of residents' place of living and contributes to residents' spiritual world. In this sense, cultural involvement embodies a specific cultural community life domain that can influence a resident's spiritual wellness and thus facilitate a stronger affectional connection with the destination. Accordingly, we contend that (a) cultural involvement informs residents' spiritual wellbeing and place attachment and (b) these two psychological factors each subsequently and serially shape residents' support for tourism development.

To illustrate this argument, this paper first presents an integrative model of the aforementioned constructs based on theoretical underpinnings of bottom-up spillover theory. Specifically, cultural involvement is proposed to affect local residents' attitudes toward tourism development both directly and indirectly through cultivating residents' spiritual wellbeing and place attachment. Then, the proposed conceptual model is empirically examined using participant samples from two ancient water villages in Zhejiang province, China. The theoretical contributions of this study are twofold. First, findings shed light on residents' attitudes toward tourism development with respect to a specific type of involvement: cultural involvement. Second, this study reveals new mechanisms elucidating how cultural involvement affects residents' attitudes toward such development; by doing so, this study pinpoints the importance of residents' involvement with culture, inner spirituality and affectional ties with their living places.

2. Theoretical background and hypothesis development

2.1. Theoretical background and conceptual model

This study is conceptually rooted in bottom-up spillover theory (Andrews & Withey, 1976). This theory posits that individuals' life satisfaction and wellbeing are determined by their evaluations of a variety of life domains (Kim et al., 2013), such as the social domain, cultural domain, work domain, family domain, spiritual domain, and so on (Sirgy, 2019). This theory suggests that the bottom domains in one's life has spillover effects on one's wellbeing (Andrews & Withey, 1976), thereby leading to one's affectional responses and attitudes toward a variety of realms in life (Kim, Kim, & Woo, 2020; Wang et al., 2020). The theory has often been applied to explain employee wellbeing in various industries (Kim, Woo, Uysal, & Kwon, 2018).

Recently, tourism scholars have adopted this theory to explore residents' quality of life and wellbeing from numerous perspectives (e.g., Kim et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2020). For example, Wang et al. (2020) identify residents' emotional wellbeing as an important part of residents' overall quality of life; and have found that residents' emotional solidarity contributed to their emotional wellbeing, affecting their attitude toward tourism. Previous studies also suggest that touristification

of a destination influences residents' life satisfaction in economic, community, emotional, and health/safety domains, contributing to residents' overall quality of life perception (Kim et al., 2020). These studies have laid the foundation for employing the bottom-up spillover theory to explain residents' wellbeing and attitudes at a destination. Nonetheless, little research has connected residents' cultural life domain with their spiritual wellbeing. In this study, we propose that cultural involvement functions as an important factor in residents' cultural life domain of residents. It affects residents' spiritual wellbeing and subsequent place attachment, which reflect residents' spiritual and place-related wellbeing; these factors consequently contribute to residents' attitudes toward tourism development.

2.2. Cultural involvement and residents' attitudes toward tourism development

The key to understanding residents' attitudes toward tourism development is to uncover potential factors that influence these attitudes along with mechanisms behind the attitude formation process (Gursoy, Chi, & Dyer, 2009). Among the factors used to assess residents' attitudes, cognitive perceptions of tourism impacts comprise an essential rational feature. In particular, when residents reasonably determine and believe that incoming tourists will generate positive economic, socio-cultural, and environmental benefits—as is especially common in the early stages of tourism development—then residents will generally hold positive attitudes and be willing to support such development (Gursoy et al., 2009; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Rasoolimanesh & Jaafar, 2017). As destinations move from the early stages of their lifecycle to others, especially more latter stages, negative tourism impacts become more apparent (Deery et al., 2012; Ko & Stewart, 2002). While some residents' support for destination development may decline in this instance, certain forms of tourism development (e.g., alternative tourism) retain the locals' favor (Gursoy et al., 2009). Therefore, it is reasonable to infer that factors apart from perceived positive tourism consequences may influence residents' perceptions of multiple tourism impacts and, by extension, their attitudes toward tourism development.

Involvement is another critical factor in residents' understanding of how tourism development may change their living environment, and thus a potential predictor of their attitudes and behaviors (Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003). Research has shown that involvement positively affects residents' attitudes toward tourism development not only directly but also indirectly, namely via their perceptions of various tourism-related consequences (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011; Látková & Vogt, 2012). As noted, involvement refers to an object's perceived personal relevance or importance based on individuals' values, beliefs, inherent needs, interests, and enthusiasm (Chi, Pan, & Del Chiappa, 2018; Zaichkowsky, 1985). This concept is naturally subject-centered and varies by person (Gao et al., 2020); and more importantly, when introduced into tourism and leisure related issues, not only the general destination involvement (Chi et al., 2018; Gao et al., 2020; Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003), but several specific types of involvement such as event involvement (Scarpi, Mason, & Raggiotto, 2019), festival involvement (Cheng, Chang, & Dai, 2015) and food involvement (Organ, Koenig-Lewis, Palmer, & Probert, 2015) have been delved into. As previous studies suggest, a specific type of involvement could explain individuals' attitudinal and behavioral consequences in a much stronger sense, the current study mainly focuses on cultural involvement to capture the enduring relevant and important values of cultural activities in a person's daily and social life. This construct is taken as the degree to which residents engage in numerous culture-related activities, such as consumption, events, performances, and artifacts.

A consensus has yet to be reached on the dimensionality of involvement. One of the reasons is that the dimensions of involvement vary according to the types of products, activities and destinations (Gao et al., 2020; Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003). Hence, when empirically testing the role of the construct of involvement, some studies treat it as a single

dimensional construct (e.g., Brown, Smith, & Assaker, 2016); others view it as a multi-dimensional construct (e.g., Lee, 2001; Scarpi et al., 2019). In this study, cultural involvement is viewed as a stable psychological state of arousal, interest, or enduring motivation of associating with and engaging into cultural related activities; and more attention is paid to its integral influences on certain affective and behavioral outcomes. In accordance with previous studies, cultural involvement is regarded as a single-dimensional construct composed of three aspects, including pleasure/interest or attraction, sign or self-expression, and centrality to lifestyle (Chi et al., 2018; Gao et al., 2020; Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003). Specifically, *Pleasure/interest or attraction* denotes individuals' interest in or perceived relevance of culture-related activities in everyday life (Gao et al., 2020; Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003). *Centrality to lifestyle* describes the impact and relevance of cultural activities on individuals' lifestyle and social networks (Gross & Brown, 2008). *Sign or self-expression* refers to the symbolic values and self-concept manifested through culture-related activities (Chi et al., 2018).

An individual's level of cultural involvement with a place significantly determines their extent of place-related knowledge (Cilingir & Basfirinci, 2014). The stronger a person's cultural involvement, the more engaged they tend to be in culture-related activities and consumption and the more knowledgeable they tend to be about their living place. Self-confidence theory suggests that greater knowledge can promote locals' pride and confidence in their own culture, thus fostering their willingness to embrace incoming tourists as a means of sharing their home culture, local cultural activities, events, and festivals with others (Pan et al., 2018). As such, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1. Cultural involvement positively influences local residents' attitudes toward tourism development.

2.3. The mediating role of spiritual wellbeing

As a crucial aspect of individuals' overall quality of life and life satisfaction, wellbeing has become one of the most highly valued concepts in several social science disciplines (Kim et al., 2013; Woo et al., 2015). The role of local residents' wellbeing has drawn enduring attention throughout the past two to three decades (Pratt, McCabe, & Movono, 2016), with several studies offering empirical evidence that local residents' subjective wellbeing, quality of life, or overall happiness plays a key role in community sustainability (Kim et al., 2013; Uysal, Sirgy, Woo, & Kim, 2016). Another form of wellbeing, spiritual wellbeing, has recently been found to positively affect individuals' evaluations of subjective wellbeing as well (Pan et al., 2018).

Spiritual wellbeing is originally conceptualized as the lived expression that exhibits the underlying state of an individual's spiritual health (Francis, Fisher, & Annis, 2015). According to Gomez and Fisher's study (2003), spiritual wellbeing mainly reflects the quality of relationships revealed in four domains which are the personal, communal, environmental and transcendental dimensions. Since spiritual wellbeing is viewed as a potential mediator in this study, a second-order factor structure would make the model theoretically parsimonious and empirically efficient, which could be justified by the following theoretical and empirical evidences: on the one hand, the original conceptualization of the construct suggests that each of the four sub-dimensions is a composition of a state of being reflecting integrated positive feelings, cognitions, and senses on a more abstract level and that all the sub-dimensions are highly correlated with each other statistically (Fisher, Francis, & Johnson, 2002), suggesting a second-order construct structure (e.g., Fisher, 2001; Fisher et al., 2002; Francis et al., 2015; Moodley, Esterhuysen, & Beukes, 2012); on the other hand, the measurement development procedure conducted by Gomez and Fisher (2003) empirically supports the second-order factor structure of the construct. Other studies in this vein include the investigation of how age

could predict spiritual wellbeing (Fisher et al., 2002), the relationship between spiritual wellbeing and psychological types (Francis et al., 2015), and other scale validation procedure conducted with a sample of South African adolescents (Moodley et al., 2012).

Therefore, this study also treats spiritual wellbeing as a second-order construct covering four dimensions: the *personal* dimension refers to the extent to which a person is satisfied with their life's purpose, meanings, values, beliefs, and directions (Fisher, 2001; Pan et al., 2018); the *communal* dimension denotes the quality and depth of relationships between a person and others, including interpersonal love, hope, trust, and faith (Gomez & Fisher, 2003); the *environmental* dimension emphasizes awe, wonder, and harmony between individuals and nature/the environment (Gomez & Fisher, 2003); and the *transcendental* dimension describes the deep and positive experience of believing in God or other transcendent spirits or divinities (Fisher, 2001).

In investigating spiritual wellbeing, scholars have noted that the religious experience of believing in God or other transcendental spirits is not the only viable way to attain spiritual wellness (Gomez & Fisher, 2003; Pan et al., 2018). Other pure forms of mental and meaningful immersion, accompanied by deep inner peace and self-detachment from the external world, can also evoke genuine spiritual happiness (Tracey, Young, & Kelly, 2006; Youm, Cheung, Seo, Koo, & Dai, 2005). As cultural involvement describes individuals' degree of engagement in culture-related activities, events, performances, or festivals, a higher level of cultural involvement is presumably more likely to elicit perceptions of spiritual meaning and inner peace within a person's self-consciousness (i.e., spiritual wellbeing). Therefore, it is reasonable to propose the following hypothesis:

H2. Cultural involvement positively influences local residents' spiritual wellbeing.

Although the terms "subjective wellbeing," "happiness," "life satisfaction," and "quality of life" are typically used interchangeably (despite being evaluated via different dimensions or domains), subjective wellbeing is uniformly thought to substantially influence residents' attitudes toward tourism development (Gursoy et al., 2002; Nawijn & Mitas, 2012; Woo et al., 2015). In light of the preceding discussion, it is logical to assume that spiritual wellbeing will significantly affect residents' attitudes toward tourism development:

H3. Spiritual wellbeing positively influences local residents' attitudes toward tourism development.

2.4. The mediating role of place attachment

Place attachment refers to individuals' tendency to establish a solid emotional link with their place of living, which can lead to a sense of feeling "at home" or "in place" (Gross & Brown, 2006; Kyle, Graefe, Manning, & Bacon, 2004; Yuksel, Yuksel, & Bilim, 2010). The most important facet of place attachment is *place identity*, which emphasizes individuals' identification with their place of living and its cultural and symbolic value (Gross & Brown, 2006; Yuksel et al., 2010). Other facets highlighted in previous studies include the functional need facet of *place dependence*, the strong feeling facet of *affective attachment*, and the social relational facet of *social bonding* (Kyle et al., 2004; Ram, Bjork, & Weidenfeld, 2016; Ramkinsoon, Weiler, & Smith, 2012). These dimensions of place attachment appear empirically interrelated (Kyle et al., 2004; Yuksel et al., 2010); as such, this study treats place attachment as a unidimensional latent variable that emphasizes components of *place identity* and *affective attachment* (Ram et al., 2016).

The role of place attachment has been widely acknowledged in the environmental psychology, human geography, and leisure and tourism disciplines. Researchers have considered the construct's potential antecedents and outcomes among locals and tourists in distinct spatial ranges such as houses, neighborhoods, and cities (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001). Involvement has been underscored as a key antecedent. For

example, in recreational contexts, recreational involvement tends to be positively related to place attachment (Kyle et al., 2004; Lee, 2001): sport involvement was found to enhance place attachment in the Olympics host city of London (Brown et al., 2016), and leisure activity involvement inspired place attachment among hikers on the Appalachian Trail (Kyle, Graefe, Manning, & Bacon, 2003).

In this study, cultural involvement captures individuals' physical, emotional, social, mental, or spiritual engagement with cultural activities, events, or other culture-related consumption or performances, through which locals are exposed to traditional cultures and festivals. The more familiar residents are with the local culture, the more likely they strongly identify with and become attached to their living place. It is therefore reasonable to propose the following hypothesis:

H4. Cultural involvement positively influences local residents' place attachment.

Another important antecedent of place attachment is closely tied to wellbeing. While a few studies have suggested that place attachment benefits individuals physically and psychologically, thus potentially enhancing subjective wellbeing and pro-environmental behavior (Junot, Paquet, & Fenouillet, 2018), this study asserts that spiritual wellbeing can directly affect residents' place attachment. The rationale behind this proposition is as follows: subjective wellbeing describes individuals' general evaluations of their life satisfaction and emotional state, which people can readily assess directly (Canada, Murphy, Fitchett, & Stein, 2016); yet spiritual wellbeing, a deep inner mental state, is more likely the foundation of individuals' fundamental beliefs, values, and norms (Le Grande et al., 2017; Pan et al., 2018; Smith & Diekmann, 2017). Spiritual wellbeing is therefore more difficult to detect and less self-conscious but can nevertheless greatly influence individuals' worldview and development of relationships with others and non-human environments (Le Grande et al., 2017; Pan et al., 2018; Smith & Diekmann, 2017). Place attachment, as a core relationship between a person and their living environment, should thus be influenced by spiritual wellbeing:

H5. Spiritual wellbeing positively influences local residents' place attachment.

As for the outcomes of place attachment, scholars have detailed individuals' attitudes, satisfaction, loyalty, and specific behaviors (Ouyang et al., 2017). The idea that a person's degree of place attachment can shape residents' attitudes toward tourism was established in the early 1990s (Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck, & Watson, 1992). Many studies have since explored the role of place attachment to explain differences in residents' attitudes toward tourism development and support for future tourism (Ouyang et al., 2017). More specifically, individuals demonstrating strong bonds and affection toward their living place tend to exhibit strong self-relevant connections and greater responsibility for overall place development; therefore, they are more likely to be motivated by and devoted to tourism development, especially when they anticipate more positive tourism impacts. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6. Place attachment positively influences local residents' attitudes toward tourism development.

3. Method

3.1. Survey instrument

To examine the effect of cultural involvement on local residents' attitudes toward tourism development and its underlying mechanisms, a self-administered survey was conducted using items adopted from the extant literature (Table 1). Three experienced tourism scholars assessed items' content validity. A pretest involving 50 participants in Wuzhen, Zhejiang province, China, was then performed to ensure the readability,

Table 1
Sample demographics and characteristics.

Variable	Category	N = 399	
		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	188	47.1
	Male	211	52.9
Age	18–25	52	13.0
	26–34	73	18.3
	35–44	186	46.6
	45–54	50	12.5
	55–64	28	7.0
	65 or older	10	2.5
Education	High school or less	58	14.5
	Junior college	36	9.0
	University degree	232	58.1
	Master's or PhD degree	73	18.3
Occupation	Student	24	6.0
	Government or institution staff	34	8.5
	Company employee	182	45.6
	Self-employed	78	19.5
	Unemployed	37	9.3
	Retired	33	8.3
	Other	11	2.5
	Monthly income	Less than 3000	72
3001–6000	124	31.1	
6001–9000	135	33.8	
More than 9000	68	17.0	

clarity, reliability, and face validity of the instrument.

The formal questionnaire used in the final survey consisted of two sections. The first section included measurement items pertaining to the four constructs of interest: 3 well-established items within tourism and destination development research were used to measure *residents' attitudes toward tourism development* (Moghavvemi et al., 2017; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). *Cultural involvement* was measured via 5 items based on Lee (2001), Kyle et al. (2003), and Chi et al. (2018). *Spiritual wellbeing* was presented as a second-order factor composed of four sub-dimensions: personal (3 items), environmental (3 items), communal (5 items), and transcendental (5 items) (Gomez & Fisher, 2003; Pan et al., 2018). Four items were used to measure *place attachment* (Gross & Brown, 2006; Gursoy et al., 2002; Kyle et al., 2004). All items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. The second section solicited respondents' demographic information (e.g., sex, education, age, and occupation) to capture basic sample characteristics.

3.2. Research sites and procedure

Data were gathered from residents of *Xitang* and *Wuzhen*, two of the most famous ancient water villages in Zhejiang province, China. *Wuzhen* earned the Asia-Pacific Heritage Award from the United Nations in 2003 and is famous for the *Wuzhen* Opera Festival and World Internet Conference. *Xitang* is renowned for its Wu and Yue local cultures, which date back to the historical periods of Chunqiu and Zhanguo over 2500 years ago. Both places attract a relatively large number of domestic and foreign visitors owing to their spectacular and idyllic Jiangnan water views, stone bridges, ancient living houses, and charming cultural traditions and events. On-site convenience sampling was adopted in this study to explore local residents' attitudes toward tourism development. Four trained interviewers collected survey data by approaching 500 residents near key tourist attractions within the two villages in August–November 2019.

3.3. Data analysis

A two-step analysis was performed in Mplus 8.3 software. First, confirmatory factor analysis with reflective measures was conducted to test the fit of the measurement model along with construct validity.

Second, covariance-based structural equation modeling using maximum likelihood estimation was employed to test the proposed model. This study controlled common method bias using both ex-ante procedural techniques and ex-post statistical techniques. The ex-ante procedural techniques are included as following: First, this study adopted established scales in previous literature, ensures measurement validity and reliability. Second, in the survey questionnaire, items of each construct were randomized to reduce the possibility of common rater effect and item characteristic effect (Malhotra, Schaller, & Patil, 2017). Third, the authors created two versions of questionnaires in which the placement of constructs were in different orders to control for context effect. In terms of the ex-post statistical techniques, Harman’s single-factor method approach and the unmeasured latent method factor approach and were used. The Harman single-factor model explained 34.35% of the total variance, well below the desired 50% criterion. The results of the unmeasured latent method factor (common latent factor) approach (Min, Park, & Kim, 2016) indicated that 23.61% of the variances in the manifest variables were explained by the latent method factor on average, which is way below the 50% threshold. These results suggest that common method variance was not a major concern in this study.

4. Empirical results

4.1. Descriptive analysis and sample demographics

Of the 500 questionnaires initially distributed, 428 were returned and 399 were deemed useable and retained for analysis. Main sample demographics are listed in Table 1. Slightly less than half (47.1%) of the respondents were female, and 52.9% were male. Over two-fifth (46.6%) were between 35 and 44 years old, followed by those aged 26–34 (18.3%), 18–25 (13.0%), and 45–54 (12.5%). Over half of the respondents (58.1%) possessed a university degree; a considerable proportion (18.3%) held a master’s or PhD degree, and less than 10% had only completed junior college (9.0%). In terms of occupation, company employees represented the largest portion of the sample (45.6%), followed by self-employed individuals (19.5%), unemployed (9.3%), and government or institution personnel (8.5%). As for the monthly income, the biggest portion fell into the range of 6001–9000 RMB (33.8%), and another one-third participants could get paid between 3001 and 6000 RMB (31.1%).

The normality of the data was tested next by examining each item’s mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis (Table 2). The mean values of all manifest variables ranged from 4.00 to 6.05; standard deviations spanned from 0.93 to 1.81. The skewness (from –1.04 to –0.05) and kurtosis (from –0.84 to 1.12) of all manifest variables fell within the acceptable range of –2 to 2, indicating normality (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & William, 1998).

4.2. Model validation

The proposed model was validated through two steps: First, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to test the overall fit,

Table 2
Mean, SD, AVE, correlations, and squared correlations.

	Mean	SD	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Cultural involvement	5.56	0.98	0.62	–							
2. Place attachment	5.32	1.24	0.69	0.52**	–						
3. Personal spiritual wellbeing	5.50	0.97	0.64	0.45**	0.40**	–					
4. Environmental spiritual wellbeing	5.65	0.99	0.59	0.58**	0.47**	0.74**	–				
5. Communal spiritual wellbeing	5.94	0.85	0.73	0.53**	0.35**	0.66**	0.70**	–			
6. Transcendental spiritual wellbeing	4.89	1.25	0.66	0.43**	0.39**	0.41**	0.45**	0.39**	–		
7. Spiritual wellbeing ^a	5.50	0.82	0.65	0.60**	0.50**	0.85**	0.87**	0.81**	0.73**	–	
8. Attitudes toward tourism development	5.17	1.17	0.65	0.42**	0.47**	0.40**	0.39**	0.34**	0.40**	0.47**	–

Notes: All items are rated on a 7-point scale. AVE = average variance extracted. Correlations are below the diagonal. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01. ^a Spiritual wellbeing is a second-order factor with four first-order factors (personal, environmental, communal, and transcendental).

validity and reliability of the measurement model. Second, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to validate the proposed structural model and test the hypotheses. Because data of this study were collected from two sites: Wuzhen and Xitang, additional model validations were further conducted using data of each subgroup.

4.2.1. Measurement model, construct validity, and reliability

CFA was conducted to validate the measurement model. The measurement model showed a satisfactory fit to the data ($\chi^2/df = 3.15, p < 0.05, RMSEA = 0.07, CFI = 0.91, TLI = 0.90, SRMR = 0.07$). Specifically, the CFI and TLI values each exceeded the threshold of 0.90; RMSEA and SRMR were lower than 0.08. The chi-square value of the measurement model was 1071.64 with 340 degrees of freedom, resulting in a chi-square/degrees of freedom ratio of 3.15. Although the ratio was slightly higher than the criterion of 3, it was acceptable considering the large sample size (Bentler & Bonett, 1980).

The reliability and validity of the constructs were tested next. Construct reliability was first evaluated based on Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability. Cronbach’s alpha (from 0.80 to 0.93) and composite reliability (from 0.81 to 0.93) estimates for the latent constructs surpassed the criterion of 0.70, indicating sufficient reliability (Table 3). The convergent and discriminant validity of each latent construct were also considered (Table 3). The standardized loadings of all manifest variables on their specific latent constructs were higher than the cutoff value of 0.50, ranging from 0.53 to 0.99 ($p < 0.01$). The model fits of treating spiritual wellbeing as a second-order construct (Model 1) and treating it as a first-order construct (Model 2) were also compared. Results showed that the higher order, second-order model (Model 1) had a significantly better fit ($\Delta\chi^2 = 53.19, \Delta df = 11, p < 0.01$), supporting the second-order construct model. Thus, spiritual wellbeing was measured as a second-order factor consisting of four sub-dimensions: personal, environmental, communal, and transcendental wellbeing. Their standardized loadings were 0.81, 0.99, 0.83, and 0.53, respectively.

The average variance extracted (AVE) values of all latent constructs were higher than 0.50, ranging from 0.59 to 0.73 (Table 3). These results reflect convergent validity. In terms of discriminant validity, the correlations among all latent constructs fell within an acceptable range (from 0.34 to 0.87, $p < 0.01$). Correlations between spiritual wellbeing and its sub-dimensions (i.e., personal, environmental, communal, and transcendental) were all higher than 0.70 due to spiritual wellbeing representing a second-order factor. The squared root of AVE of all latent constructs were also larger than the correlations between any given latent construct and other constructs. Similarly, the higher values of squared correlations between spiritual wellbeing and its sub-dimensions were reasonable because spiritual wellbeing was composed of these first-order constructs. These results collectively supported the discriminant validity of the measure. In sum, the measurement model was validated.

4.2.2. Structural model and hypothesis testing

To validate the structural model and test proposed hypotheses, a SEM analysis was conducted. First, the model fit indices were examined

Table 3
Results of measurement model.

Factors	Variables	Standardized loadings	Composite reliability	Cronbach's α	AVE
Cultural involvement	1 Participating in cultural related activities pleases me	0.84**	0.89	0.89	0.62
	2 Most of my friends and family members are in some way connected with cultural related activities	0.78**			
	3 Participating in cultural related activities plays a vital role in my life	0.77**			
	4 When participating in cultural related activities, I could demonstrate my ability, personality and high-quality taste	0.80**			
	5 local cultural activities in this village interest me	0.74**			
Place attachment	1 Living in this village is meaningful to me	0.73**	0.90	0.89	0.69
	2 I feel a strong sense of belonging to this village	0.88**			
	3 I identify strongly with living in this village	0.90**			
	4 I get more satisfaction living in this village than living in any other place	0.79**			
Personal spiritual wellbeing	1 I have developed a very good self-awareness	0.83**	0.84	0.84	0.64
	2 I could develop joy in life	0.83**			
	3 I have found my meaning of life	0.74**			
Environmental spiritual wellbeing	1 I have developed connection with nature	0.74**	0.81	0.80	0.59
	2 I could develop awe at breathtaking view	0.77**			
	3 I have developed harmony with the environment	0.79**			
Communal spiritual wellbeing	1 I could develop forgiveness towards others.	0.89**	0.93	0.93	0.73
	2 I could develop kindness towards other people	0.89**			
	3 I could develop respect towards for others	0.70**			
	4 I could develop a love for other people	0.89**			
	5 I could develop a trust between individuals	0.87**			
Transcendental spiritual wellbeing	1 I could develop a personal relationship with the Divine/God	0.87**	0.91	0.89	0.66
	2 I could develop worship of the Creator	0.74**			
	3 I could develop oneness with Divine/God	0.92**			
	4 I could develop peace with Divine/God	0.87**			
	5 I could develop prayer life	0.63**			
Spiritual wellbeing ^a	1 Personal spiritual wellbeing	0.81**	0.88	0.82	0.65
	2 Environmental spiritual wellbeing	0.99**			
	3 Communal spiritual wellbeing	0.83**			
	4 Transcendental spiritual wellbeing	0.53**			
Attitudes toward tourism development	1 The future of tourism development in our village is very bright	0.90**	0.84	0.83	0.65
	2 Having tourists visiting our village indicates that our village is very attractive	0.91**			
	3 Overall, I am optimistic with the future tourism development in our village	0.56**			

Notes: Goodness-of-fit indices: $\chi^2/df = 3.15$, $p < 0.05$, RMSEA = 0.07, CFI = 0.91, TLI = 0.90, SRMR = 0.07. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$. ^a Spiritual Wellbeing is a second-order factor with four first-order factors (personal, emotional, communal, and transcendental).

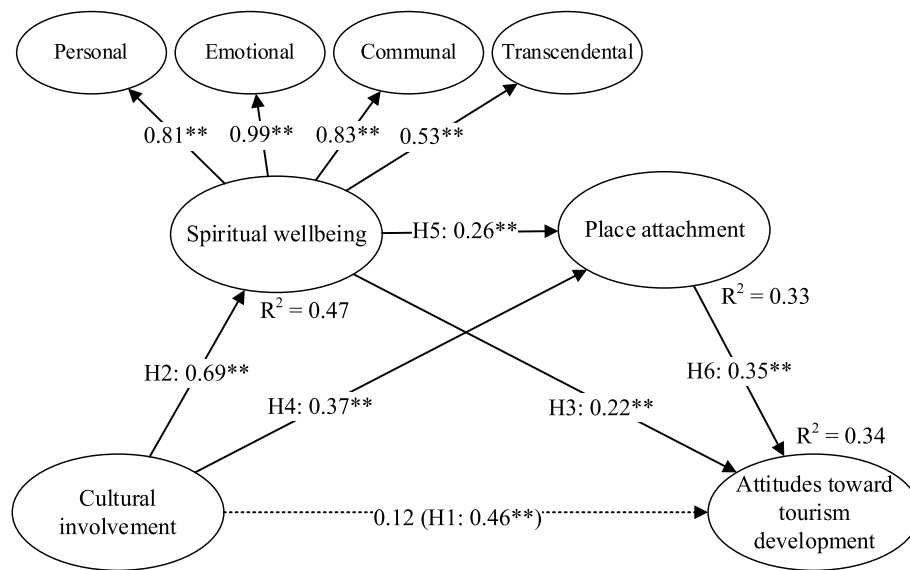


Fig. 1. Results of structural equation model.

Goodness-of-fit indices: $\chi^2/df = 3.15$, $p < 0.05$, RMSEA = 0.07, CFI = 0.91, TLI = 0.90, SRMR = 0.07. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$. Solid lines indicate significant paths; dashed line indicates insignificant path.

to evaluate the overall model. Similar to the measurement model, the structural model revealed a satisfactory model fit ($\chi^2/df = 3.15$, $p < 0.05$, RMSEA = 0.07, CFI = 0.91, TLI = 0.90, SRMR = 0.07); see Fig. 1. Second, the magnitude and significance level of the proposed paths were evaluated, and hypotheses were tested. Specifically, cultural involvement had a significant total effect on residents' attitudes toward tourism development ($\beta = 0.46$, $p < 0.01$), lending support to H1. Cultural involvement also exerted significant effects on spiritual wellbeing ($\beta = 0.69$, $p < 0.01$; H2) and place attachment ($\beta = 0.37$, $p < 0.01$; H4); as such, H2 and H4 were supported. When controlling for the effects of cultural involvement, spiritual wellbeing had a significant effect on residents' attitudes toward tourism development ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$; H3) and place attachment ($\beta = 0.26$, $p < 0.01$; H5); as such, H3 and H5 were thus supported. While controlling for the effects of cultural involvement and spiritual wellbeing, place attachment exerted a significant effect on attitudes toward tourism development ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$), lending support to H6.

Third, a serial mediation analysis was conducted to examine the mediational paths in the proposed model (Table 4). The theoretical model indicated three mediational paths in the relationship between cultural involvement and attitude toward tourism development through spiritual wellbeing and place attachment. Specifically, the cultural involvement \rightarrow spiritual wellbeing \rightarrow place attachment \rightarrow attitude toward tourism development path revealed a significant positive effect (β

Table 4
Results of the mediational analysis.

Model path	β estimate	Standard error	t value	Result
Cultural involvement \rightarrow Spiritual wellbeing \rightarrow Place attachment \rightarrow Attitude toward tourism development	0.06**	0.02	3.13	Supported
Cultural involvement \rightarrow Spiritual wellbeing \rightarrow Attitude toward tourism development	0.15**	0.05	2.96	Supported
Cultural involvement \rightarrow Place attachment \rightarrow Attitude toward tourism development	0.13**	0.03	3.89	Supported
Cultural involvement \rightarrow Attitude toward tourism development	0.12	0.07	1.58	Rejected

Notes: ** $p < 0.01$.

= 0.06, S.E. = 0.02, $t = 3.13$, $p < 0.01$); the cultural involvement \rightarrow spiritual wellbeing \rightarrow attitude toward tourism development path showed a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.15$, S.E. = 0.05, $t = 2.96$, $p < 0.01$); and the cultural involvement \rightarrow place attachment \rightarrow attitude toward tourism development path also had a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.13$, S.E. = 0.03, $t = 3.89$, $p < 0.01$). While controlling for these mediation effects, the direct effect of cultural involvement on residents' attitudes toward tourism development became insignificant ($\beta = 0.12$, S.E. = 0.07, $t = 1.58$, $p = 0.11$). These results suggested a full serial mediation via spiritual wellbeing and place attachment on the relationship between cultural involvement and residents' attitudes toward tourism development.

In total, 47% of variance in spiritual wellbeing was explained by cultural involvement ($R^2 = 0.47$); 33% of variance in place attachment was explained by cultural involvement and spiritual wellbeing ($R^2 = 0.33$); and 34% of variance in attitudes toward tourism development was explained by cultural involvement, spiritual wellbeing, and place attachment ($R^2 = 0.34$). Additionally, to test whether the theoretical model held across the two research sites (i.e., Wuzhen and Xitang), the structural model was further validated using the data from the two sites respectively. The SEM results of each subgroup showed acceptable model fit (Wuzhen sample: $n = 196$, $\chi^2/df = 2.52$, $p < 0.05$, RMSEA = 0.09, CFI = 0.88, TLI = 0.87, SRMR = 0.07; Xitang sample: $n = 203$, $\chi^2/df = 2.26$, $p < 0.05$, RMSEA = 0.08, CFI = 0.90, TLI = 0.89, SRMR = 0.08). Moreover, results revealed that patterns of the path relationships and mediation effects of both subgroups were comparable to the overall model, showing extra evidence of model validation.

5. Conclusions

5.1. Conclusions and theoretical contributions

This study constructs and empirically tests a conceptual model of the interrelationships among residents' cultural involvement, spiritual wellbeing, place attachment, and attitudes toward tourism development. Findings make several noteworthy contributions to the travel and tourism literature. First, this study represents a pioneering empirical attempt to confirm the critical role of cultural involvement in host communities' tourism development. Though the general involvement construct has been extensively used to explain individuals' attitudes and behaviors in marketing and consumer behavior research area, little is

known about the specific type of involvement from the perspective of culture. As host culture being an essential component under the tourism context, and cultural involvement being a more enduring and inside motivational driving force, it is vital to understand whether local residents' extent of involvement in cultural activities could influence their support for tourism development.

Second, this study unearths a new mechanism of how cultural involvement contributing to residents' attitudes toward tourism development, which is a fully serial mediation through spiritual wellbeing and place attachment. By doing this, the present study extends bottom-up spillover theory via two aspects: on the one hand, cultural involvement is highlighted as an important cultural community life domain; on the other hand, spiritual wellbeing is identified as a unique component of residents' quality of life. Although spiritual wellbeing has become a key research topic among multiple disciplines such as medicine, behavioral science, psychology and religion in the last two decades, and it has been widely acknowledged as a vital factor to enhance meaningfulness, positive psychological state and quality of life, and decrease anxiety, depression and fatigue (Lewis, Salins, Rao, & Kadam, 2014; Youm et al., 2005), the spiritual wellbeing status of local residents has been hardly paid attention to by tourism scholars. By pointing to the presence and impact of spiritual wellbeing and empirically validating its dimensionality (i.e., on personal, environmental, communal, and transcendental dimensions), this study enriches knowledge of residents' wellbeing that their quality-of-life pursuits extend beyond economic, emotional, and social factors commonly considered in prior literature; the spiritual realm is of similar importance.

Third, this study unveils the positive influences of cultural involvement and spiritual wellbeing on place attachment, a critical indicator of the emotional bond between residents and host communities (Yuksel et al., 2010). In some destinations, residents may become detached from tourism activities or even leave the host community entirely due to overwhelmingly negative tourism consequences (Stylidis, 2018). At the same time, authentic cultural experiences in destinations are highly appealing to tourists (Paulauskaite, Coca-Stefaniak, & Morrison, 2017). The present study's findings imply that this paradox can be resolved by encouraging residents to become more culturally involved in their community and by nurturing residents' spiritual wellness. As a result, residents could develop stronger destination attachment and be less likely to depart. Additionally, cultural involvement will enable residents to provide tourists authentic experiences, resulting in a virtuous cycle of destination attachment.

Last, this study emphasizes that the ultimate goal of cultural involvement is not to force residents to support tourism development against their will; rather, locals' welfare is paramount and can promote the advantages of residents' active cultural participation. Cultural involvement offers one way to prompt locals to connect with their roots and attain spiritual growth and comfort. Residents will then feel a greater sense of belonging and identity, which should in turn encourage their support for ongoing tourism development in their communities.

5.2. Managerial implications

This study delivers practical implications and useful guidance for destination management. First, local governments and policymakers should devote greater effort to facilitating residents' cultural participation and involvement on different levels. One key level is the living community, since deeply involving into a community is an essential component of residents' community life domain. Local governments and communities are thus encouraged to organize more culture-themed events, festivals, and celebrations to offer communicating platforms for residents to learn more about local cultures and traditions, and thus gain their cultural confidence and identity. Another key level exists in destination management organizations. When initiating marketing strategies, local residents also matter in that they are the best potential marketers if enabled to actively share their authentic culture with

tourists, especially under the trendy home-stay lodging circumstance. Bearing that in mind, destination managers should take initiatives to include locals to participate in cultural related marketing events both online and offline.

Second, careful managerial attention is needed to nurture residents' spiritual wellbeing, which is a unique but commonly overlooked aspect of residents' quality of life. Given that spiritual wellbeing could not only significantly enhance individuals' meaningfulness and harmony in self-development, interpersonal interactions, work and life, and thus their ability to cope with stress and disease more positively, but also foster residents' place attachment and then their positive attitudes towards tourism development indicated by this study. Government may consider conducting positive interventions such as mental education, psychological and behavioral team trainings in school, community and organization management to boost its population's spiritual wellbeing. Moreover, because spiritual wellbeing is a combination of personal joy, environmental connection, communal bonds, and transcendental inner peace, and if cultivated properly, each aspect of spiritual wellbeing could play a part in addressing concerns related to tourism development. For instance, environmental spiritual wellness may encourage locals to engage in environmentally responsible behavior. Additionally, similar to earlier findings related to emotional solidarity (Wang et al., 2020), communal spiritual wellbeing may help residents establish harmonious relationships with other community members and tourists; this form of wellbeing may therefore present an effective solution to host-guest conflict.

Third, the present study offers insight into ways to elevate residents' place attachment. Emotional and symbolic bonds between a resident and a place are developed through a long-term process. The research sites in this study, *Xitang* and *Wuzhen*, are exemplars of traditional Chinese villages with storied histories and unique ancient cultures. Residents of these two villages, whether they were born and raised or relocated there, are bonded to these places due to the areas' cultural atmosphere and unique lifestyle. This phenomenon echoes the finding that once residents become involved in the local culture, they experience and become immersed in spiritual comfort, which allows them to develop a stronger attachment to the place. When local governments and destination management organizations seek to promote place attachment via cultural involvement, they should pay close attention to the types and contents of cultural activities. Only events and activities that reflect a place's authentic community culture are likely to positively influence place attachment; commercialized, superficial, and homogeneous events should be avoided.

5.3. Limitations and suggestions for future research

Despite this study's novel revelations, as with any other piece of research, several limitations should be addressed in the future. First, all data were collected from two representative traditional villages (i.e., two destinations in a mature stage of their lifecycle) in the southern part of China, which could hinder the generalizability of the main findings. Residents living in destinations in different stages of development may possess disparate perceptions of tourism impacts and correspondingly distinct attitudes toward tourism development. Future studies should involve various types of destinations (e.g., seaside villages, cities, and mountainous areas) in different phases of development (e.g., those that are emerging, growing rapidly, or declining) and in diverse regions (e.g., China's northern, western, or southwestern regions, or in other countries entirely, as a basis for comparison). Longitudinal studies in the destinations profiled in this research would also be worthwhile, as the hypothesized direct and indirect effects may change over time.

Second, spiritual wellbeing is a complex construct worth future investigation. This study utilized spiritual wellbeing as a mediator and thus was not intended to test the effect of spiritual wellbeing on a sub-dimensional level. However, for tourism scholars who are interested in examining the antecedents and consequences of spiritual wellbeing, the

effect of each dimension may be worth exploring. Last but not least, this study did not consider the possible moderating effects of residents' individual characteristics. Features of residents' personalities and demographics, such as age, gender, occupation, and time living in the destination, may shape their place attachment as well as their attitudes toward tourism development. Other emotional factors, such as the quality of resident–tourist interaction, emotional solidarity, trust, and perceived social and cultural distance, may also serve as potential moderators. These topics should therefore be explored further in future work.

Author Contribution Statement

Dr. Jieyi Li: Conceptualization, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Supervision. Dr. Li Pan: Funding acquisition, Conceptualization, Methodology, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. Dr. Yaou Hu: Corresponding author, Supervision, Data Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

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