

# **The influence of place attachment, ad-evoked positive affect and motivation on intention to visit: Imagination proclivity as a moderator**

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## **Abstract**

Integrating the theoretical foundations of symbolic interactionism, parasocial interaction, direct affect transfer, push and pull motivational framework and narrative transportation, this study investigates the determinants of tourists' intention to visit a destination using Heidi, a famous literary and television series persona, as a stimulus. Place attachment, ad-evoked positive affect, and motivation were theorized as antecedents of intention to visit and imagination proclivity as a moderator. The model was tested using data collected from 410 prospective Spanish tourists. Results show motivation and place attachment as key determinants of intention to visit among individuals with higher imagination proclivity, while positive affect was most relevant for individuals with low imagination proclivity. Findings expand our understanding of travel intention toward unvisited destinations, providing empirical support that place attachment, positive affect and motivation are engendered by prior media exposure and moderated by tourists' imagination proclivity.

**Keywords:** place attachment, motivation, intention to visit, positive affect, imagination, narrative transportation

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## **Introduction**

What induces tourists to visit a destination? Intention to travel has long been a research topic of great interest in the tourism literature (Baloglu 2000; Ng, Lee, and Soutar 2007; Whang, Yong, and Ko 2016). Various theories and models exist on tourists' propensity to travel to a destination, such as the theory of planned behavior (Jordan et al. 2017; Shen, Schüttemeyer, and Braun 2009), the theory of cultural distance (Ng, Lee, and Soutar 2007) and the choice set approach (Li, McCabe, and Li 2017). The existing body of research identifies destination image (Baloglu 2000; Whang, Yong, and Ko 2016), attitude (Hsu, Cai and Li 2010; Sparks 2007) and familiarity (Bianchi, Milberg, and Cúneo 2017; Tan and Wu 2016) as antecedents of intention to visit. In addition, motivation is an important variable in influencing travel intention (Gnoth 1997; Jang et al. 2009; Wong, Law, and Zhao 2018).

Travel choice depends on symbolic meanings tourists attribute to destinations (Lefebvre 1991). Media plays a prominent role in shaping place meaning (Kim 2010; Low 1992) and is “the basis for selecting and evaluating potential places to visit” (Urry 2002, 7). The symbolic interactionism theory (Blumer 1969) provides a framework to understand how place meaning is transmitted from media productions to audience members. The theory posits that viewers' behavior toward media- featured objects (e.g. places) is based on their meaning as bestowed by media personalities through the process of parasocial interaction (Horton and Wohl 1956). Prolonged exposure to media programs entails vicarious experience of the narrative storylines, which in turn imbue media places with meanings (Riley and Van Doren 1992). Thus, prior to actually visiting a film destination, prospective tourists can develop a “sense of place” (Macionis 2004) and emotional attachment (Kim 2010; Low 1992).

A considerable body of research exists on the concept of place attachment (e.g. Loureiro 2014; Prayag and Ryan 2012; Yuksel, Yuksel, and Bilim 2010). However, existing studies mainly focus on place attachment to already experienced destinations and empirical evidence of the concept is lacking in the context of unvisited or imagined places. There is consensus that narrative links elicited by storytelling create feelings of emotional place bonding in audience members, despite lacking previous physical contact with the place (Droseltis and Vignoles 2010; Kim 2010). Stories are omnipresent in individuals' life, as they are found in social interactions, novels, movies or TV (Gordon, Gerrig, and Franklin 2009). Media storytelling contributes to place meaning creation as it evokes transportation to imaginary places (Van Laer et al. 2013).

In addition, media-viewing experiences evoke affective responses (d'Hautesserre 2015; Matthews 2003). Audience feelings toward media celebrities transfer to the featured screen places (Macionis 2004) through the direct affect transfer mechanism (Redondo 2012). Extant research recognizes the importance of affect in understanding tourist behavior (d'Hautesserre 2015; Jang et al. 2009; Walters, Sparks, and Herington 2012). At the pre-travel stage, ad-evoked affect influences travel intention to the destinations being promoted (Ghosh and Sarkar 2016; Jang et al. 2009). Nevertheless, the impact of positive affect toward a place featured in past media viewing experiences, as a driver of visit intention, remains understudied.

Previous studies show that personal traits (e.g. self-character similarity, narrative transportability, empathy) moderate the affective and persuasive media effects on audience members (Appel and Richter 2010; Hall and Bracken 2011; Valkenburg and Peter 2013). Given that media creates meaning through parasocial interaction between media characters

and the audience (Horton and Wohl 1956) and mental transportation to the narrated places (Van Laer et al. 2013), viewers' imagination proclivity becomes an essential factor in media message receptivity (Brechman and Purvis 2015). In order to experience media's narrative suspended reality, the audience must use their imagination otherwise the cognitive, affective and conative media responses are less likely to occur (Green et al. 2008; LaMarre and Landreville 2009).

The majority of studies examine tourists' behavior toward film destinations resulting from recent media viewing (Hudson, Wang, and Gil 2011; Kim and Kim 2018; Singh and Best 2004). However, previous research establishes that early-life exposure to media narratives also influences grown-up tourism decision-making (Laing and Crouch 2009). Extant tourism studies (e.g. Bartoletti 2010; Martin 2010; Marschall 2012) acknowledge the role of personal memories in influencing behavioral intentions. Media content can also be stored in individual's memory and trigger intention to visit the featured media locations, as representing "nostalgia-stimulating spaces for some audiences" (Kim, Kim, and Petrick 2017, 1). Bartoletti (2010) labels the emotional tourism activity revolving around embodied memories as "memory tourism".

An emblematic case of "memory tourism" is *Heidiland* in the Swiss Alps (Bartoletti 2010), the setting of the popular animated cartoon *Heidi, a Girl of the Alps* (1974), based on Johanna Spyri's novel "Heidi" (1881). The Japanese production was broadcasted internationally and was exceptionally successful in Spain. The triumph of the cartoon is evident among several generations of Spanish children and adults (Wissmer 2014). The desire to reconnect with the fictional world portrayed in the TV series (Marschall 2012) is likely to drive tourists' visits to *Heidiland*. In particular, Bartoletti (2010) suggests that the conveyed media image of the

Swiss Alps, embodying an idyllic and relaxed way of life, based on a deep bond with the Alpine nature is what fuels “memory tourism”. Despite the success of *Heidi*’s TV series in Spain and its memory-evoking potential (Van Staden 2011), no study has explored the factors contributing to grown-up audience members’ intention to visit the Swiss Alps.

The purpose of this study is to test a conceptual model linking motivation, place attachment, ad-evoked affect, imagination proclivity and intention to visit. The proposed framework draws on symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1969) and concepts from media theories, such as parasocial interaction (Horton and Wohl 1956), vicarious experience (Tannenbaum 1980) and narrative transportation (Green and Brock 2000). The model shows place attachment, ad-evoked positive affect and travel motivation as antecedents of intention to visit. Furthermore, imagination proclivity moderates the aforementioned relationships. From a practical perspective, the model posits that understanding the drivers of visit intention as moderated by differences in tourists’ imagination abilities will enable destination marketing organizations (DMOs) to formulate effective advertising and communication strategies.

The contribution of this study is four-fold. First, prior research (e.g. Anton and Lawrence 2016; Stylos et al. 2017) focuses on place attachment developed on the basis of long-term personal interaction. However, researchers (e.g. Farnum, Hall, and Kruger 2005; Schroeder 2004) have theorized that individuals can also develop attachment to places through indirect experience. To our knowledge, this is the first study to provide empirical evidence to the concept of place attachment toward destinations not previously experienced, developed on the basis of media exposure. More specifically, this research supports the assertion that place attachment is stimulated by narratives (Low 1992; Russell 2012), which imbue imaginary places with emotional and symbolic meaning. Second, this research draws on symbolic

interactionism theory, the concepts of parasocial interaction (Horton and Wohl 1956) and vicarious experience (Tannenbaum 1980) from media studies to explain place attachment and tourist decision-making behavior (intention to visit). In so doing, this study addresses Lewicka's (2011) call for the application of new theoretical perspectives to further clarify the underlying foundations of place attachment.

Third, the study answers Walters et al.'s (2012) call for research on individuals' cognitive imagination ability, stimulated by imagery, as a moderator in decision-making processes. Existing tourism research mainly focuses on manipulating the effectiveness of the ad stimulus (e.g. Nath, Devlin, and Reid 2016; Walters, Sparks and Herington 2012; Wang et al. 2007). This research, drawing on narrative transportation theory (Green and Brock 2000), establishes the moderating role of imagination proclivity on the structural relationships between place attachment, ad-evoked positive affect, motivation and intention to visit. Finally, despite the fundamental role of motivation in influencing tourists' intention to visit (e.g. Gnoth 1997; Hsu and Huang 2008; Wong, Law, and Zhao 2018), the majority of existing studies capture motivations retrospectively using post-travel surveys. Hsu et al. (2010) question the suitability of assessing motivations post-travel and call for researchers to capture pre-travel motivations. To the best of the authors' knowledge, no study examines motivation to visit destinations featured in films prior to travel.

**[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]**

## **Conceptual Background and Hypotheses Development**

### Theoretical Framework

Past tourism studies commonly explore visit intention using the theory of planned behavior (see Ajzen 1985). Despite the theory's relevance and extensions in predicting travel intention (e.g. Hsu and Huang 2012; Quintal, Lee and Soutar 2010; Sparks and Pan 2009), it has received much criticism for assuming that human actions are predominantly rational, neglecting the role of emotions (Sniehotta, Pousseau and Araújo-Soares 2014; McCabe, Li and Chen 2016). In addition, Sirakaya and Woodside (2005) argue that travel decision-making is not adequately explained by a single theory. Baloglu (2000) further highlights the need for new and integrative approaches to investigate determinants of visit intention. Ryan et al. (2009) call for research that combines media and tourism knowledge to study film-induced tourist behavior. Researchers have long advocated and encouraged the adoption of interdisciplinary approaches to study tourism (e.g. Darbellay and Stock 2012; Echtner and Jamal 1997; Laws and Scott 2015). Yet, the majority of tourism studies fail to integrate knowledge from multiple disciplines (Oviedo-García 2016). Accordingly, to explain intention to visit a media-featured destination, this study integrates extant knowledge from several disciplines including tourism, media studies, psychology and marketing. In particular, the proposed integrative model draws on the theorizations of symbolic interactionism, parasocial interaction, direct affect transfer, push-pull motivational framework and narrative transportation. The premise of each of these key theories and frameworks, relevant for this research, are briefly explained below.

The tenets of symbolic interactionism theory (Blumer 1969) support the transfer of meaning to viewers in a mediated context. Blumer's (1969) theorization is based on two key principles. The first premise posits that individuals' behavior toward objects, other human beings, situations or abstract ideas, is driven by their symbolic meanings. Applied to media viewing experiences, audience members will be motivated to perform a particular action (e.g. impetus to visit a location featured in a program) toward the mediated object (e.g. a featured place) on the basis of its meaning. The second proposition relates to the origins of the meaning, which is acquired through interaction with significant others.

Originally, the theory assumed only interactions with other human beings as a source of meaning. However, with the increasing spread of mass media, researchers suggest media characters as alternative meaning informants (Beniger 1987; Denzin 2016; Ellis, Streeter, and Engelbrecht 1983; Newton and Buck 1985, (Tsay-Vogel and Schwartz 2014). Beniger (1987) argues that mass media effects are equivalent to interpersonal communication, referred to as "parasocial interaction" (Horton and Wohl 1956). The concept, depicting the "illusion of face-to-face relationship with the performer" (Horton and Wohl 1956, 215), serves as a proxy for social interaction. Several researchers advocate the incorporation of parasocial interaction in the symbolic interactionism framework (Ellis, Streeter, and Engelbrecht 1983; Horton and Strauss 1957; Tsay-Vogel and Schwartz 2014). The media effect is especially salient in repeated interactions with media personages (e.g. long-running TV series), as the "routine" element elicits intimacy and empathy toward the characters (Ellis, Streeter, and Engelbrecht 1983). Thus, media personalities evolve in "significant others" for the viewers and set the way in which audience members perceive and act towards media-featured objects (e.g. places, personalities). In turn, audiences' parasocial interaction with media figures and

vicarious engagement with the programs' storylines, elicit a sense of attachment and involvement toward the displayed characters and settings.

Next, the direct affect transfer mechanism (MacKenzie, Lutz, and Belch 1986), postulates that the feeling induced by one object can be transferred to another object (Kim, Lim, and Bhargava 1998). The theory provides explanation for the persuasive effects of media content on attitude formation (e.g. brand attitude) and behavioral intention (e.g. purchase intention) (Redondo 2012). The process involves the transfer of positive affect elicited by pairing an unconditioned stimulus (e.g. a celebrity, a smiling and attractive person) to a conditioned stimulus (e.g. a product, a destination). In the context of advertising, the mechanism encourages retrieval of autobiographical memories, contributing to favorable product evaluation (Sujan, Bettman, & Baumgartner, 1993). Hence, direct affect transfer explain how feelings aroused when exposed to media content influence subsequent attitude and behavior.

Media also plays a role in stimulating motivation to visit featured places (Macionis 2004; Rajaguru 2014). No general agreement exists in terms of the theories that best explain tourists' motivation but the push-pull framework (Dann 1977) remains highly popular and has proved useful in assessing film-induced tourist motivation (Macionis 2004). The framework posits that tourists are 'pushed' to fulfill their psychological needs and destination attributes act as pull factors (Baloglu and Uysal 1996). Pull factors play a major role in arousing travel desire, push factors are more decisive in explaining the decision-making process (Hsu and Huang 2008). In understanding travel motivation, Dann (1977) argues for the superiority of push factors over destination pull attributes, as internal psychological needs represent a necessary precondition for actual travel decision. Common push factors in tourist

motivation research include escape, relaxation, excitement and learning (see for e.g. Li and Cai 2012; Papadimitriou and Gibson 2008; Park and Yoon 2009). In one of the earliest research works on tourist motivation, Crompton (1979) classifies push motives into nine factors: escape from a mundane environment, exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, prestige, regression, relationship enhancement, social interaction, novelty and education. Subsequent studies build on Crompton's (1979) work. For example, Yuan and McDonald (1990) identify five push factors explaining overseas travel: escape, novelty, prestige, relationship enhancement and relaxation.

Finally, the cognitive and affective outcomes of media exposure are dependent upon audience's ability to experience narrative transportation, which acts as a facilitator in the media persuasion process (Brechman and Purvis 2015; Green et al. 2008; LaMarre and Landreville 2009; Van Laer et al. 2013). The narrative transportation theory addresses individuals' perception of immersion into the imaginary narrative setting, resulting in a perceptual change (Escalas 2006). Appel and Richter (2010) outline three mechanisms through which narrative transportation facilitates persuasion: (i) it decreases the effect of counterarguments; (ii) it stimulates vivid mental representations resembling real-world experiences; and (iii) it elicits emotional experiences leading to involvement with the narratives' content. However, the stimulating qualities of media content itself may not suffice to persuade recipients (Green and Brock 2000; Walters et al. 2012). Past research identifies the effect of individual traits (e.g. need for affect) on the degree of narrative transportation (Appel and Richter 2010), likelihood to empathize with the narrative (Hall and Bracken 2011), and processing style (Burns, Biswas, and Babin 1993). Studies also emphasize the critical role of imagination abilities in explaining individuals' differences in receptivity and response to media persuasion (Brechman and Purvis 2015; Green et al. 2008; LaMarre and

Landreville 2009). In short, individuals high in imagination proclivity will be more easily transported by the narrative and hence, more susceptible to its persuasive influence.

*Place attachment to unvisited destinations and intention to visit*

Place attachment is the “emotional link formed by an individual to a physical site that has been given meaning through interaction” (Milligan 1998, 2). It is well accepted that attachment to a place develops over time through frequent and lengthy interaction (Altman and Low 1992; Kyle, Mowen, and Tarrant 2004; Lewicka 2011). Previous studies show individuals feel attached to places they have lived before (Anton and Lawrence 2016; Beckley et al. 2007) or visited as a holiday destination (Hosany et al. 2017; Loureiro 2014). However, there is also increasing support contending that people develop attachment to places not experienced before (e.g. Cheng and Kuo 2015; Farnum, Hall, and Kruger 2005), but which nevertheless elicit a special personal connection (e.g. imaginary places from science fiction, historical locations) (Droseltis and Vignoles 2010; Schroeder 2004).

Evidence suggests that storytelling (in oral, written or visual form) stimulates place attachment, acting as a vehicle for meaning (Kim 2010; Low 1992; Russell 2012). Previous studies establish the transferability of symbolic meaning embedded in films to the audience’s minds (Macionis 2004; Kim, Kim, and Petrick 2017). The symbolic interactionism theory (Blumer 1969) and parasocial interaction (Horton and Wohl 1956) applied in a mediated context, can explain the development of “sense of place” (Macionis 2004) and attachment (Kim 2010; Low 1992) toward the media-featured place.

Furthermore, existing research indicates that vicarious engagement (or “vicarious insiderness”) (Relph 1976) with a place acquired through non-personal experience not only leads to attribution of place meaning, but also fosters the development of place attachment (Rubinstein and Parmelee 1992; Tuan 1974). In the context of film-watching experiences, audience members identify with the media personalities and immerse in the portrayed situations (Kim and Richardson 2003; Yen and Teng 2015). This media effect is referred to as “vicarious experience” (Tannenbaum 1980) and designates viewers’ imaginary participation in media characters’ experiences. Importantly, vicarious experience of film places has behavioral consequences, as past research demonstrates its relevance as a push factor for film-induced tourism (Macionis 2004).

In addition, prior studies recognize memories as another catalyst for place attachment (Lewicka 2013; Milligan 1998; Scannell and Gifford 2010). Different forms of memories contribute to people’s emotional connection with places (Lewicka 2013). However, existing research only considers memories of places shaped through past visitation. The role of other types of memories in place attachment formation, such as those created by media, remains understudied. For Couldry (1998), the symbolic and emotional meanings of media places are stored as cognitive knowledge and appreciated as a memory. Research suggests that film-viewing experiences evoke nostalgic memories associated with audience’s emotional engagement with the film settings (Kim, Kim, and Petrick 2017). Thus, viewers who are psychologically connected to past media programs seek to reduce nostalgia by visiting film settings and reliving the experienced emotions (Kim, Kim, and Petrick 2017). Reijnders (2016) maintains that consumption of media narratives leads to a form of *topophilia* (Tuan 1974) toward the filmed place, which, in turn, influences audience travel destination choice. Other research empirically supports a positive relationship between place attachment and

behavioral intentions (e.g. intention to recommend and revisit likelihood) in the context of film-induced travel destination (Wong and Lai 2015). Hence, we propose that:

H<sub>1</sub>: Place attachment to a media-featured destination positively influences intention to visit.

*Ad-evoked positive affect and intention to visit*

Extant marketing research recognizes the important role of affect in consumer decision-making (Bülbül and Menon 2010; Cohen, Pham, and Andrade 2008). Affect refers to an internal feeling state experienced toward an object through either direct exposure or representation (Cohen, Pham, and Andrade 2008). Consumer studies consider affect, emotions and feelings as analogous (Bülbül and Menon 2010; Pham, Geuens, and De Pelsmacker 2013). Previous research in tourism provides empirical support for the role of affect on pre-travel destination decision-making (Ghosh and Sarkar 2016; Jang et al. 2009; Walters, Sparks, and Herington 2012). For example, Walters et al. (2012) demonstrate the impact of ad-evoked affective responses on destination purchase intention. Furthermore, Ghosh and Sarkar (2016) show that positive emotions elicited by visualizing a travel destination influence visit intention. In the film-viewing context, Yen and Croy (2016) posit that audience members' feelings toward media characters are transferred to the media-featured destinations. The direct affect transfer mechanism (MacKenzie, Lutz, and Belch 1986) provides a theoretical foundation to explain affect-arousing media effect (Redondo 2012). Van der Veen and Song (2014) reveal that positive attitudinal evaluations of a destination featured in a celebrity-endorsed advertising, increase visit intention. Hence, it is plausible to expect that positive affect toward a media-featured place (e.g. the Swiss Alps) will be elicited with the endorsement of a media celebrity (e.g. *Heidi*).

Previous studies report that tourists' emotional attachment to film celebrities manifest into positive behavioral intentions toward the filmed destination (Yen and Teng 2015; Wong and Lai 2015). However, the impact of positive affect toward a place featured in past media programs, as a driver of visit intention, remains understudied. Previous advertising research indicates that ad-evoked nostalgia, reflecting individual's positive affect toward objects (e.g. people, places, events) from the past, influences consumers' purchase preferences for nostalgia-associated products (Pascal, Sprott, and Muehling 2002). Given the nostalgia-stimulating qualities of media content (Kim, Kim, and Petrick 2017), using a media character from childhood TV program as an advertising stimulus is likely to evoke an affective response, and subsequently influence intention to visit the advertised destination. Hence, we hypothesize that:

H<sub>2</sub>: Ad-evoked positive affect positively influences intention to visit.

#### *Motivation and intention to visit*

Tourist motivation has received considerable attention in the literature (e.g. Li et al. 2015; Moscardo et al. 1996; Pearce and Lee 2005). Various theories and models exist to explain what drives individuals to travel. Examples include the push-pull framework (Dann 1977), the travel career ladder concept (Pearce and Lee 2005) and the means-end chain theory (Gutman 1982). Adopting the push-pull motivational framework, Macionis (2004) argues that media programs shape audience's intrinsic motivation to visit a screen place, as viewers envisage the benefits associated with being in that destination through the storyline (Riley and Van Doren 1992).

Motivation is modeled as a predictor of future intentions, including intention to revisit and recommendation likelihood (e.g. Li and Cai 2012; Jang et al. 2009; Yoon and Uysal 2005). Yoon and Uysal (2005) identify a positive relationship between push motives and destination loyalty. Other studies, however, fail to support the relationship between motivation and behavioral intention (see for e.g. Ramkissoon and Uysal 2011; Li et al. 2010). The evidence of mixed findings has led researchers to challenge the suitability of measuring travel motivation retrospectively using post-vist surveys. Hsu et al. (2010) allude to the possible bias when asking tourists to remember retrospectively their motives in choosing a destination. Yet, limited empirical studies exist investigating the structural relationship between pre-travel motivation and intention to visit. Baloglu (2000) confirms travel motivation as a determinant of visit intention. Surveying potential tourists, Konu and Laukkanen (2009) identify motives related to health and physical activity and self-development as the most important predictors of intention to take a wellbeing holiday. In another study, novelty-seeking was a powerful driver for travel intention among senior tourists (Jang et al. 2009).

In the context of film-induced tourism, previous research highlights the role of media in shaping potential tourists' motivation to visit a destination (Macionis 2004). In an exploratory study, Singh and Best (2004) reported six motivational factors for visiting *Hobbiton*, the *Lord of the Rings* movie setting: iconic attractions, learning, novelty, interest in Tolkien's novel, satisfying children's interest and accessibility. In addition, both push (e.g. novelty, social interaction) and pull (e.g. beautiful scenery) motives were influential among avid Singaporean viewers of Korean TV drama to visit Korea (Chan 2007). In another study, Finish tourists to Suomen Filmiteollisuus Filmvillage indicated push motives such as control, novelty, relaxation, and nostalgia influencing their choice (Sunni and Komppula 2012).

Laing and Crouch (2009) claim that future travel plans are inspired by childhood imagery and narratives, “even at a subconscious level” (p.1). Through an exploratory qualitative approach, the authors identify an enduring and powerful influence of media consumed at an early age on motivations for frontier tourism. Thus, early-life exposure to media narratives was reported to be influential in tourist decision-making. Based on the preceding discussion, this study investigates the relationship between travel motivation and intention to visit a destination portrayed in a TV series. The following hypothesis is formulated:

H<sub>3</sub>: Travel motivation positively influences intention to visit.

#### *Moderating Effect of Imagination Proclivity*

Previous research in advertising (e.g. Brechman and Purvis 2015) and tourism (e.g. Ghosh and Sarkar 2016; Wong, Lee, and Lee 2016) explored the moderating role of individuals’ imagination proclivity on the effects of narrative information processing. For example, Huang and Mitchell (2014) demonstrate that ease of imagination contributes to deeper consumer-brand relationships. In social psychology, Broemer (2004) reports that imagination moderated the impact of differently framed messages on attitudes toward adopting healthy behaviors. Empirical research in tourism also provides evidence for the moderating effect of imagination on ad information processing. For example, Ghosh and Sarkar (2016) establish the significant effect of imagination capacity as a moderator on the influence of sensory reference cues on evoked destination emotion during pre-travel stages. Furthermore, Walters et al. (2007) argue that imaginative factors affect the evaluative phase of the destination selection process.

Evidence suggests that imagination abilities also play a role in consumers' buying behavior (Petrova and Cialdini 2008; Schlosser 2003). The ease of imagery activates a scenario of consuming the advertised product, which, in turn, leads to positive behavioural responses (e.g. purchases). Petrova and Cialdini (2008) argue that this effect will be more pronounced when individuals have been previously exposed to product imagery (e.g. movies, brochures, etc.), as it can evoke stored mental representations and hence, affect the decision-making process. However, empirical research examining imagination proclivity as a moderator for the persuasive effect of narrative transportation on travel decision-making is still lacking (Walters, Sparks, and Herington 2012).

From the above discussions, introducing a media character (*Heidi*) as a mental stimulus in an advertising message will induce readers' narrative transportation, whose imagination proclivity, in turn, will serve as a catalyst for activating ad's persuasive effect. In particular, we expect that the impact of media-evoked place attachment, positive affect and motivation on intention to visit the promoted destination (the Swiss Alps) will differ across individuals with varying levels of imagination. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H<sub>4a</sub>: Imagination proclivity moderates the relationship between place attachment and intention to visit.

H<sub>4b</sub>: Imagination proclivity moderates the relationship between positive affect and intention to visit.

H<sub>4c</sub>: Imagination proclivity moderates the relationship between motivation and intention to visit.

## **Methods**

### *Study setting*

The study context is the Swiss Alps, the setting of Johanna Spyri's well-known novel "Heidi". Heidi is a fictional character from the popular animated cartoons *Heidi, a Girl of the Alps* (Darling-Wolf 2016). The famous anime TV series, inspired by Spyri's novel, were produced in the 1970s and include 52 episodes. After Japan, Spain was the second country to broadcast the TV series with the first episode appearing on the Spanish National Television in 1975. The anime attracted wide interest and viewers demanded for prime time broadcast, enabling adults to watch (Wissmer 2014), with the press labeling it as a "social phenomenon" (Europapress 2015). The success of the TV series during those years can be attributed to its novelty and to the fact that Spain was lacking a domestic animation industry (Soler and Cabrera 2015). The series was rerun in 1987 on Spanish national television (Soler and Cabrera 2015), and broadcasted again in 1996 and 2007 on a major private Spanish TV channel (FormulaTV 2007). Accordingly, several generations of Spanish children grew up watching the series.

*Heidi's* success interests scholars studying the influence of the fictional character. For example, prior research has focused on the content of the cartoon series. Van Staden (2011) compared the adaptation of *Heidi* in Japan and South Africa, and examined the series' impact on South Africans' image of Europe. In another study, Darling-Wolf (2016) explored the influence of the Japanese cartoon animator (Miyazaki) on the Swiss character's traits. Other studies address *Heidi's* implications for the Swiss Alps as a tourist destination. For example, Matos-Wasem (2005) discusses the association between *Heidi* and foreign tourists' perceived image of the Alpine region. Furthermore, *Heididorf*, the village that recreates *Heidi's* homeland, served as the setting for a study on nostalgic tourism experiences (Bartoletti

2010). Recent attempts to further leverage *Heidi*'s brand include the opening of a new theme park in Flumserberg (Switzerland) featuring the literary character (Travel + Leisure 2017). *Heidi*'s character evokes a sense of nostalgia (Van Staden 2011), makes it a worthy topic of research in tourism.

### *Stimuli*

In this study, we assert that place attachment is developed on the basis of prior prolonged media exposure (i.e. watching the popular Heidi TV series featuring the Swiss Alps during childhood). To access respondents' meanings and associations, memories of childhood watching experience have to be retrieved (Havlena and Holak 1991). Research support the ability of advertising to prompt autobiographical memories (e.g. Sujan, Bettman and Baumgartner 1993; Braun, Ellis and Loftus 2002). More specifically, some studies establish that exposure to advertising, which incorporate nostalgic cues, serves as a trigger for activating memories, emotions and associations related to products from the past (e.g. (Merchant et al. 2013; Muehling and Sprott 2004; Muehling, Sprott, and Sultan 2014). For example, Muehling et al. (2014) show the influence of childhood brand exposure on consumers' purchase intention and brand attitude toward nostalgia-themed advertising.

Accordingly, this research uses print advertisement (ad) containing reference to *Heidi* as a stimulus to retrieve childhood memories and elicit visit intention. The ad depicts a mountainous landscape from the Swiss Alps. Picture-based stimuli are common in tourism to elicit future behavioral intention (see for e.g. Nath, Devlin, and Reid 2016; Walters, Sparks, and Herington 2012) and marketing studies (see for e.g. Kergoat and Meyer 2015; Pascal, Sprott and Muehling 2002). In Walters et al.'s (2012) study examining the influence of

consumption visionary responses on holiday purchase decisions, potential tourists had to imagine themselves in a destination featured in an advert. In another study, Nath et al. (2016) use printed advertisements to manipulate hotel service promises and investigate their impact on customers' expectation formation. Photo-elicitation method has also proved useful in studying place attachment (Briggs, Stedman and Krasny 2014).

The advertisement in this study includes a combination of visual and textual stimuli, following Walters et al. (2007) contention that inserting both text and pictures in print ads significantly impact on participants' elicited elaboration process. The authenticity of the ad was ensured in several ways. First, a graphic designer, with the researchers' involvement, produced the ad. Second, similar to Muehling's (2013) study, potential respondents were told that the researchers were collaborating with an advertising agency interested in prospective Spanish tourists' responses to a promotional campaign. Third, the color print ad featured a real photo, downloaded from an online image depository, of the Swiss Alps exhibiting an Alpine landscape with a typical rural house, so as to resemble *Heidi's* house in the mountains. The advertising message was inspired by the promotional content of Switzerland Tourism official website. To further generate arousal, the text and slogan include several mentions to *Heidi*, such as, "relive the world of Heidi", "come walk in the footsteps of Heidi". Descriptors of the Alpine scenery are also included, such as, "idyllic Alpine landscapes", "the fragrance of its lush meadows", and "pure fresh air". Finally, two academics and two advertising practitioners approved the look of the advertisement. After being exposed to the ad, respondents completed the questionnaire.

### *Measures*

The study uses multi-item scales to measure the first and second-order constructs. Observed indicators for the first-order constructs and higher-order constructs (e.g. second-order) have multiple latent variables as lower-order subcomponents (Hair et al. 2017; Jarvis, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff 2003). Following Loureiro (2014), place attachment was operationalized as a second-order formative construct consisting of two dimensions (place identity and place dependence), each measured by a reflective first-order factor (Type II: reflective first-order, formative second-order model as per Jarvis et al. (2003) classification). More specifically, 5 items captured place identity and place dependence was measured using 4 items, adapted from Williams and Vaske's (2003) scale. Several studies have confirmed the reliability and validity of the place attachment measure in tourism (e.g. Hosany et al. 2017; Prayag and Ryan 2012; Yuksel, Yuksel, and Bilim 2010). Ad-evoked positive affect was modelled as a first-order reflective construct using seven items (adapted from Pham, Geuens, and de Pelsmacker 2013; Chang 2008).

To capture tourist motivation, several studies were reviewed (e.g. Kyle, Mowen, and Tarrant 2004; Li and Cai 2012; Papadimitriou and Gibson 2008). Four push factors (escape, relaxation, excitement and learning) commonly identified in tourism research (e.g. Crompton 1979; Li and Cai 2012; Park and Yoon 2009; Papadimitriou and Gibson 2008) were selected for this study. Travel motivation was modelled as a multidimensional second-order reflective construct following Kim et al. (2015), and in line with with Jarvis et al. (2003) Type I factor model. Imagination proclivity was measured using four items adapted from Ghosh and Sarkar (2016). Intention to visit was captured using three items (adapted from Han, Hsu, and Sheu 2010). Following Weijters et al. (2010) guidelines and consistent with previous studies, respondents rate their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements for each construct on a 5-point scale (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree).

To mitigate any potential common method variance (CMV), the survey design and administration adhered to Podsakoff et al. (2003) guidelines. In addition, two common statistical analyses were used to assess common method bias. First, Harman's single-factor test was conducted on the study's constructs (Podsakoff and Organ 1986). Results show that no single factor accounts for the majority of variance (first factor explaining only 23.4% of total variance). Second, we followed Liang et al.'s (2007) procedure to determine CMV in PLS research using the unmeasured latent construct method (see also Matzler et al. 2016; Zhang et al. 2014). Most of the common method factor loadings were not significant. The substantive variance (average 0.649) was greater than method variance (average 0.009), yielding a ratio of approximately 72:1. Thus, we conclude that common method bias is not an issue in this study (Podsakoff et al. 2003).

### *Sampling and Data Collection*

Trained research assistants collected data face to face with prospective Spanish tourists. A purposive sampling procedure identified potential respondents. If subjects have visited the Swiss Alps or were not willing to participate in the study, the research assistants would intercept the next available person(s). Respondents were approached at the departure lounge of a major Spanish train station and invited to take part in the survey. Conducting intercept interviews in public locations, such as train stations, are a relatively convenient approach to access a heterogeneous adult population (Ashraf and Merunka 2017). A total of 410 valid questionnaires were retained for subsequent analyses. The sample consisted of 55.6% females and 44.4% males. Profile by age groups was as follows: 18-35 years old (37.1%); 36-50 years

old (36.6%); and over 50 years old (26.3%). Respondents were well educated, with 43.5% holding a university degree and age groups

### *Data Analysis*

Partial Least Square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM), increasingly popular in tourism and travel research (do Valle and Assaker 2016), was used to examine the measurement model and test the hypothesized relationships. PLS-SEM is suitable for predictive research (e.g. predicting intention to visit) and is useful in modeling reflective and formative constructs (Hair et al. 2017). PLS is also advisable when: (i) the proposed model contains moderators, measured on a continuous scale (in this study, imagination proclivity is measured using a 5-point Likert scale); and (ii) the proposed model includes higher-order constructs (Hair, Matthews, et al. 2017). Path models in PLS are defined in terms of two sets of linear relations: inner and outer models. The inner model specifies the relationship between latent variables and the outer model shows the relationship between latent and manifest variables (Lohmöller 1989). SmartPLS 3.2.6 software (Ringle, Wende, and Becker 2015) was used for data analysis and consisted of several steps. First, the measurement scales for the nine first-order constructs were tested for reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Second, the two-stage approach (Hair et al. 2017) was applied to confirm place attachment and motivation as second-order formative and reflective constructs respectively. The model was then estimated to test the hypothesised relationships. Finally, consistent with established guidelines (e.g. Chin, Marcolin and Newsted 2003; Hair et al. 2017), additional analysis examines the moderating (interaction) effect of imagination proclivity on the proposed structural relationships.

## Results

### *Measurement model*

In terms of data distribution, skewness and kurtosis for the scale items were within recommended absolute values, indicating no violation of the normality assumptions (Kline 2005). Factor loadings, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were used to assess the psychometric properties of the reflective first-order measures (Table 1). From Table 1, all factor loadings were greater than 0.60 (Kline 2005) and significant ( $p < 0.01$ ), with  $t$  values exceeding the critical value of 3.29. Composite reliability values were greater than 0.80, indicating that all the measures are reliable (Bagozzi and Yi 1988). Average variance extracted for each construct was above 0.50, establishing convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Discriminant validity was examined via the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations, a superior procedure to the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt 2015). From Table 2, all HTMT ratios were below the 0.85 cut-off value, thus establishing discriminant validity.

**[PLEASE INSERT TABLE 1]**

**[PLEASE INSERT TABLE 2]**

For the second-order constructs (place attachment and motivation), the two-stage approach for estimating high-order component models was employed (Hair et al. 2017). First, the model was estimated to obtain latent variable scores for the respective lower-order dimensions. Second, the latent variable scores were used as manifest indicators of place attachment and motivation and the model was re-estimated. Table 3 shows the assessment of

the measurement model for second-order constructs. Reliability and validity were assessed for the reflective second-order construct: motivation. Factor loadings for the 4 dimensions (escape, excitement, learning and relaxation) onto the second order construct were significant and greater than 0.6. Composite reliability is above the critical value of 0.7, providing evidence of internal consistency. Average variance extracted was above 0.50, confirming convergent validity. In addition, for place attachment, posited as a formative second-order construct different set of criteria were used (i.e. outer weight significance and collinearity (Hair et al. 2017)). From Table 3, weights for place identity ( $w = 0.718$ ) and place dependence ( $w = 0.437$ ) are significant. VIF values were below the critical value of 5, thus indicating no collinearity issues (Hair et al. 2017). Collectively, these results establish place attachment and motivation as second-order constructs.

**[PLEASE INSERT TABLE 3 HERE]**

#### *Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing*

The structural model (Figure 1) was evaluated using  $R^2$  estimates, standardized path coefficients ( $\beta$ ), and significance level ( $t$ -values). Significance level was assessed using a non-parametric bootstrap re-sampling procedure (5000 sub-samples were randomly generated) (Hair et al. 2017). The  $R^2$  values measure the structural model predictive power and the path loadings indicate the strength between independent and dependent variables.  $R^2$  for the main model (0.280) exceeds the recommended 0.10 threshold (Hair et al. 2017). The Standardized Root Mean Square (SRMR) value for the model (0.096) was acceptable (Henseler et al. 2014). Using a blindfolding procedure, Stone-Geisser's  $Q^2$  values were used

to assess the predictive relevance of the model (Hair et al. 2017).  $Q^2$  value for the model (0.17) indicates acceptable fit and satisfactory predictive relevance.

**[PLEASE INSERT TABLE 4 HERE]**

Table 4 shows standardized path coefficients and  $t$ -values for the model. The path coefficient, from place attachment to intention to visit ( $\beta=0.286$ ;  $p<0.001$ ), supports hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2 proposes a positive relationship between ad-evoked affect and intention to visit. The path coefficient ( $\beta=0.135$ ) is significant ( $p<0.05$ ), thus confirming hypothesis 2. In addition, as hypothesized ( $H_3$ ), the parameter estimation between motivation and intention to visit is positive and significant ( $\beta=0.279$ ;  $p<0.001$ ).

*Moderating effect of Imagination Proclivity*

To test the moderating effect of imagination proclivity, interaction effects were computed via the product indicator approach for the reflective constructs and the two-stage procedure for the formative construct (i.e. place attachment) (Hair et al. 2017). The significance of the interaction effect was assessed using a bootstrapping procedure (5000 resamples). From Table 4,  $R^2$  increases from 27.6% (main effects model) to 39.8% (interaction effects model). The increase in  $R^2$  establishes that the moderator is meaningful. Results ( $\beta=0.128$ ;  $p<0.001$ ) indicate that imagination proclivity moderates the relationship between place attachment and intention to visit, supporting hypothesis 4a. Hypothesis 4b proposed that imagination proclivity moderates the relationship between positive affect and intention to visit. The path coefficient ( $\beta=-0.296$ ) is significant ( $p<0.001$ ), thus supporting hypothesis 4b. However, contrary to expectations, positive affect translates into intention to visit when individuals

display low levels of imagination proclivity. Findings ( $\beta=0.191$ ;  $p<0.00$ ) also support the hypothesized moderating effect of imagination on the relationship between motivation and intention to visit (hypothesis 4c). Overall, results confirm the moderating effects of imagination proclivity.

## **Discussions and Implications**

The aim of this study was to develop and test a conceptual model hypothesizing place attachment, positive affect and travel motivation as antecedents of intention to visit a destination featured in a media program and imagination proclivity as a moderator. The study confirms the proposed relationships and demonstrates the moderating role of individuals' imagination proclivity. Findings provide several theoretical and practical implications. The proposed model draws on the symbolic interactionism and media communication concepts (e.g. parasocial interaction and vicarious experience) to understand the person-place bond created through a media-viewing experience. Existing research has studied place attachment from various disciplinary perspectives such as environmental psychology (e.g. Anton and Lawrence 2016; Scannell and Gifford 2010), geography (e.g. Relph 1976; Tuan 1974) and leisure and tourism (e.g. Loureiro 2014; Stylos et al. 2017; Yuksel, Yuksel, and Bilim 2010). However, this is the first empirical study to adapt media communication theories to provide new insights into the development of place attachment to an unexperienced destination. In so doing, this research responds Lewicka's (2011) call to apply different theoretical approaches to understand place attachment.

Advancing current knowledge on place attachment, the study found empirical support to the notion that people can develop emotional connection to a place based on narrative links (e.g.

Droseltis and Vignoles 2010; Farnum, Hall, and Kruger 2005; Low 1992; Russell 2012). The majority of prior research argues that a long-term direct interaction is a necessary condition for a person-place bonding to arise (Anton and Lawrence 2016; Beckley et al. 2007; Kyle, Mowen, and Tarrant 2004). However, this study demonstrates that mass-media storytelling serves as a foundation for the development of place attachment. Findings further support Schroeder's view (2004) that the connection with a place is predominantly psychological rather than strictly physical. The results are also consistent with existing film-induced tourism literature positing that the emotional and symbolic meanings associated with media places stimulate a sense of belonging and attachment (Kim 2010; Wong and Lai 2015).

The study demonstrates that place attachment significantly enhances visit intention. Past research has documented the predictive power of place attachment on post-visit tourist behaviors such as intention to recommend (e.g. Hosany et al. 2017), revisit intentions (e.g. Stylos et al. 2017), and loyalty (e.g. Prayag and Ryan 2012; Yuksel, Yuksel, and Bilim 2010). However, to the best of the authors' knowledge, no previous study has examined the direct relationship between place attachment and intention to visit during the pre-travel stage. Findings empirically support the theoretical prediction that emotional bonding to unvisited places, developed on the basis of secondary sources, is an important determinant of visit intention (Cheng and Kuo 2015). Past film-induced tourism research emphasizes the positive influence of place attachment on intention to revisit and recommend a film destination (Wong and Lai 2015). However, this study suggests that attachment to media-featured places acts as a catalyst, inducing intention to visit, thus demonstrating its relevance in tourists' destination choice.

In line with previous studies (e.g. Jang et al. 2009; Konu and Laukkanen 2009), the results provide support for the relationship between travel motivation and intention to visit. The established relevance of internal psychological motives in explaining visit intention adds to the limited literature on the association between pre-travel motivation and intention to visit (Li and Cai 2012). The motivational dimensions examined in this study (i.e. relaxation, escape, learning and excitement) are consistent with the push drivers established in existing film-induced tourism research (e.g. Chan 2007; Singh and Best 2004; Suni and Komppula 2012). However, unlike prior research focusing on understanding push and pull motives post-travel (e.g. Singh and Best 2004; Suni and Komppula 2012), results demonstrate a significant structural relationship between pre-visit motivations and intention to visit. Hence, this study answers Hsu et al.'s (2010) call for research to investigate tourists' motives at the pre-travel stage and their subsequent impact on travel intention.

Another contribution of the study relates to the moderating effect of imagination proclivity in travel decision-making processes. Previous research in advertising and tourism (e.g. Brechman and Purvis 2015; Ghosh and Sarkar 2016; Wong, Lee, and Lee 2016) confirms the moderating role of narrative transportation. However, to date, no studies examine imagination abilities as a moderator on the relationships between place attachment, ad-evoked positive affect, motivation and intention to visit. Consistent with prior research suggesting the interaction effects of imagination on individuals' elaboration processes (Green et al. 2008; LaMarre and Landreville 2009), this study reveals that imagination proclivity significantly moderates the structural paths in the proposed model. In particular, motivation and place attachment are the most relevant determinants of visit intention (motivation:  $\beta=0.468$ ; place attachment:  $\beta=0.397$ ) for individuals with high imagination proclivity.

In contrast, the predictive power of positive affect on visit intention ( $\beta=.400$ ) is stronger for prospective tourists with lower levels of imagination proclivity. A plausible explanation lies in the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion (ELM) (Petty and Cacioppo 1986).

Depending on the receiver's involvement and cognitive abilities, ELM provides a framework for understanding how people process advertising. The model suggests two major routes to persuasion: central (involving cognitive elaboration) and peripheral (related to message source factors such as affective associations). High involvement with the stimuli will result in central processing, while low motivation or reduced cognitive abilities will lead to peripheral processing. Applying the ELM, it is likely that respondents with high imagination proclivity process the advertising message via the central route and respondents with low imagination abilities use the peripheral route. Findings are consistent with evidence suggesting that individuals with different imagination abilities vary in their decision-making process when exposed to imagination-evoking advertisements (Petrova and Cialdini 2008; Philips 2017). To summarize, *Heidi* as a stimulus "switches on" the cognitive mechanism in highly imaginative respondents and triggers affective responses in those with low imagination proclivity.

In addition, the findings reveal that both place identity and place dependence, contribute significantly to the formation of place attachment. Yet, comparing the relative influence of each dimension on place attachment, results identify place identity as more relevant (place identity ( $w=0.718$ ); place dependence ( $w=0.437$ )). In contrast, prior research in the context of already visited destinations reports place dependence, i.e. functional attachment (Williams and Vaske 2003) as the major contributor to place attachment (Loureiro 2014). Thus, the results suggest that place attachment developed on the basis of media exposure stems, to a greater extent, from the symbolic (i.e. cognitive) rather than the functional significance of the

place. This is in line with previous theorizations about media viewing influence on identity formation (e.g. Matthews 2003). Since media programs provide opportunities for identification with characters and storyline vicarious experience (Macionis 2004), the meaning viewers attribute to the featured places is predominantly symbolic and psychological rather than functional.

Furthermore, results show that ad-evoked positive affect is a significant predictor of intention to visit the destination, consistent with advertising (e.g. Bülbül and Menon 2010; MacInnis and Price 1987) and hospitality and tourism literatures (e.g. Ghosh and Sarkar 2016; Hwang, Yoon, and Park 2011), suggesting that affective responses to advertising content can lead to behavioral intentions (e.g. booking a holiday). Findings also substantiate the argument that positive affective reactions to destination advertising, endorsed by media celebrities, influence visit intention (Van der Veen and Song 2014). Congruent with prior advertising research (e.g. Pascal, Sprott, and Muehling 2002), results provide additional support for the potential of nostalgia-associated advertising stimuli (i.e. *Heidi*) to evoke positive affective responses, which in turn translates into greater ad effectiveness (e.g. intention to visit the advertised destination).

### *Managerial Implications*

The study offers important implications for destination marketing organizations (DMOs). Findings show that place attachment developed on the basis of narrative media content influences visit intention. Thus, bestowing destinations with symbolic and emotional meanings, which in turn, lays the basis for place attachment formation in potential tourists, should be a priority for destination marketers. To instigate an emotional bonding with

destinations at the pre-travel stage, marketers should develop communication strategies based on storytelling. DMOs are encouraged to examine the literary and media heritage of their destinations and leverage its potential as a driver of tourist visitation. In addition to capitalizing on existing narratives, marketing practitioners are encouraged to create new ones that can enhance a destination's brand identity. With reference to the Swiss Alps, the National Tourism Office (NTO) could leverage the success of the *Heidi*'s TV series in Spain by launching a promotional campaign featuring the famous anime character. For example, promotional multimedia booths can be installed on busy squares in Spanish cities inviting passers-by to "escape" from the hectic urban lifestyle and "visit" the idyllic Swiss Alps landscape of *Heidi* TV series. Online social media channels (e.g. Facebook, YouTube, Instagram) can be used as a more cost-efficient way to run promotional campaigns. Previous research reports the superiority of online media over traditional offline channels in terms of expenditure efficiency (Pergelova, Prior and Rialp 2010).

Furthermore, results indicate the favorable influence of motivation on visit intention. Hence, marketing strategies should focus on communicating the psychological benefits offered by the destination (e.g. relaxation, excitement, escape). The study supports the moderating role of individual's imagination proclivity on the drivers of visit intention. Destination marketers should develop emotional advertising appeals when targeting tourists with lower imagination proclivity, and focus on rational appeals when reaching highly imaginative potential tourists. DMOs could benefit from using virtual reality technology in their communication strategies, compensating for potential tourists' low imagination. Emerging online behavioral advertising techniques are helpful to target potential tourists with varying imagination abilities. Online behavioral advertising is based on monitoring users' online behavior and using the collected information to show individually targeted advertisements (Boerman, Kruikemeier and

Zuiderveen Borgesius 2017). As such, it should be possible to design an algorithm capable of discriminating between high/low imaginative users based on their reactions to advertisements.

### *Limitations and Directions for Future Research*

The results of this study should be interpreted with caution for a number of reasons. First, tourists' intention to visit was captured instead of actual behavior. Although modeling travel intention is common in tourism research, actual visit behavior may differ from behavioral intentions (Bianchi, Milberg and Cúneo 2017; Hsu and Huang 2012). Future research could implement a longitudinal design to monitor if and when intention translates into visitation. Second, the focus was on potential Spanish tourists to the Swiss Alps, the geographical setting of the TV series *Heidi*. Future studies should conduct international comparative research including viewers from other countries with prior exposure to the cartoon. Third, the sample consisted mainly of residents from metropolitan areas of major Spanish Mediterranean cities. Escape from hectic urban lifestyle is established as a relevant push motive in rural and nature-based tourism (Park and Yoon 2009). Future research should test the model with potential tourists residing in smaller and less urbanized locations.

Fourth, the study captures only push motivations related to intention to visit the Swiss Alps as a nature-based tourist destination. Further studies could include film-specific pull motivational factors (Hudson, Wang, and Gil 2011; Macionis 2004) and compare their relative contribution to travel intention. Fifth, the current research instructed respondents to imagine themselves in the *Heidi*'s landscape. Further studies could use unstructured advertising content to test the effects of spontaneous imagination, an under-researched area

(Philips 2017). There is also scope to expand the proposed model to include other determinants of tourists' intention to visit such as destination brand equity (e.g. Horng et al. 2012) and tourist-destination congruity (e.g. Matzler et al. 2016). Additional research is also needed to fully understand the nature of affective responses elicited by exposure to a nostalgia-evoking stimulus such as *Heidi*. Nostalgia can trigger mixed emotions (e.g. pleasure and sadness) (Wildschut et al. 2006). Future studies should aim to "dissect" other types of affective states (positive and negative) aroused by nostalgia-evoking stimuli, including, for example, sorrow for the lost childhood idyll.

In addition, there is a need to investigate the moderating effects of other variables, such as nostalgia proclivity (Hwang and Hyun 2013), gender and age (Leonidou, Coudounaris, and Kvasova 2015). The influence of these variables on tourist behavior has been demonstrated in other contexts. The proposed model can also be extended to examine possible mediators on the relationships between place attachment, positive affect, motivation and intention to visit. For example, prior works (e.g. Pascal, Spratt, and Muehling 2002; Van der Veen and Song 2014) establish that attitudes (e.g. attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the destination) mediate behavioral intentions. Finally, existing studies establish that place attachment, based on personal experience-in-place, predicts imagined restorative perceptions of places (Ratcliffe and Korpela 2016). Screen-based media memories have a great resemblance to real personal experience memories (Gordon, Gerrig, and Franklin 2009). An area for further research would be to examine the possible restorative qualities of media-featured places.

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Figure 1. Conceptual Model

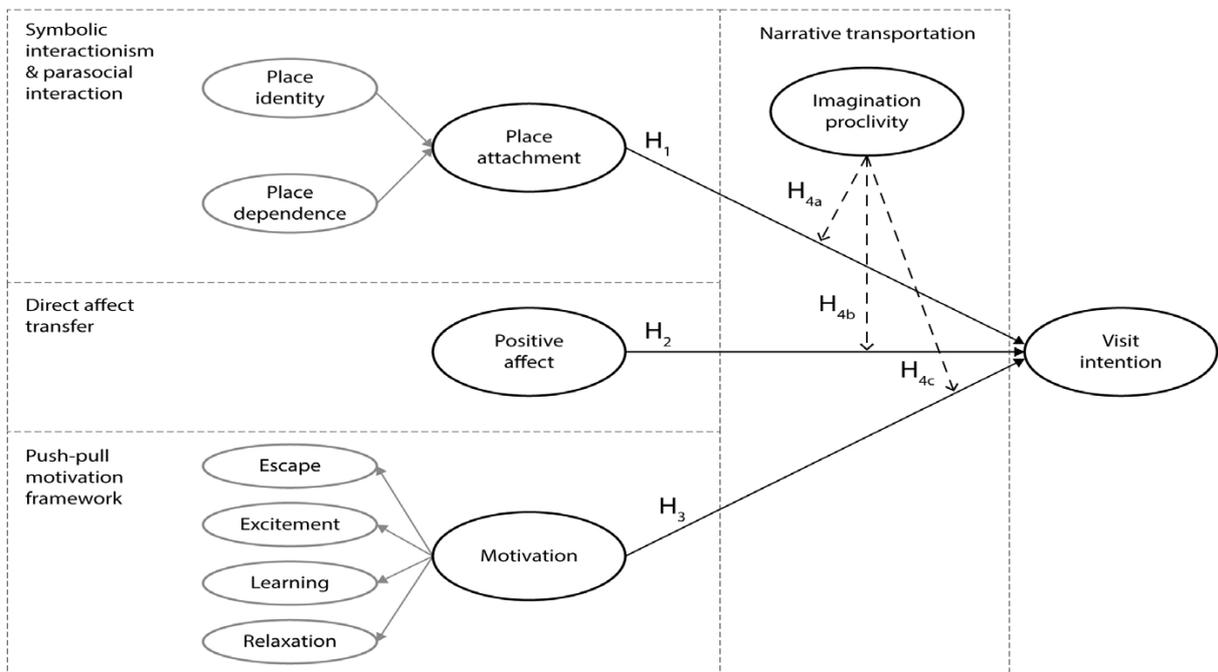


Table 1. Assessment of the Measurement Model for First-Order Constructs.

Construct items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Loading	t-Values	CR	AVE
<i>Place identity</i>					0.924	0.708
I am very attached to the place in the advertisement.	2.96	1.03	0.873	57.721		
I identify strongly with the place in the advertisement.	2.99	1.08	0.829	39.691		
This place is very special to me.	2.84	1.02	0.834	38.317		
The place in the advertisement means a great deal to me.	2.70	0.96	0.839	37.555		
I feel like this place is part of me.	2.70	1.10	0.831	52.112		
<i>Place dependence</i>					0.827	0.549
I wouldn't substitute the place in the advertisement for any other mountainous area.	2.42	0.96	0.616	9.812		
The place in the advertisement is the best place for mountain tourism.	2.92	0.89	0.846	36.757		
No other place can compare to the place in the advertisement for mountain tourism.	2.83	0.89	0.804	23.836		
I will get more satisfaction out of the place in the advertisement than any other mountain tourism destination.	2.82	0.93	0.675	8.288		
<i>Positive affect</i>					0.890	0.535
I feel cheerful about the destination shown in the advertisement.	3.85	0.76	0.783	25.945		
I feel enthusiastic about the destination shown in the advertisement.	3.66	0.92	0.754	18.893		
I feel delighted about the destination shown in the advertisement.	3.79	0.88	0.731	18.036		
The destination shown in the advertisement gives me a feeling of tenderness.	3.42	0.97	0.733	16.388		
I feel warm-hearted about the destination in the advertisement.	3.36	0.92	0.718	13.946		
I feel affectionate about the destination shown in the advertisement.	3.37	0.91	0.735	14.868		
I feel astonished about the destination shown in the advertisement.	3.81	0.88	0.665	15.337		
<i>Escape</i>					0.921	0.796
To get away from it all.	4.12	1.00	0.904	61.229		
To escape from routine.	4.17	0.98	0.899	62.224		
To forget about it all.	3.96	1.14	0.874	47.538		
<i>Excitement</i>					0.869	0.689
To do exciting things.	4.11	0.85	0.789	25.067		

To experience new novelty.	3.97	0.92	0.863	49.079		
To feel exhilaration.	4.13	0.88	0.836	38.950		
<i>Learning</i>					0.830	0.622
To learn about the local history of the area.	3.70	1.06	0.797	18.662		
To learn about the culture of the area.	3.95	1.05	0.855	24.135		
To discover new places.	4.33	0.91	0.706	9.826		
<i>Relaxation</i>					0.904	0.702
To relax.	4.32	0.94	0.778	16.424		
To be close to nature.	4.45	0.81	0.847	34.264		
To enjoy the view.	4.55	0.77	0.907	40.577		
To reduce built-up tension.	4.21	1.01	0.813	18.145		
<i>Imagination proclivity</i>					0.853	0.593
The advertisement brought memories to my mind.	3.23	1.10	0.744	10.278		
As I read the advertisement, I formed pictures about much of what was being said in it.	3.40	0.96	0.793	6.666		
I found myself thinking of images of the Swiss Alps when I read the advertisement.	3.44	0.93	0.817	11.538		
It was easy to form images or pictures of what was being said in the advertisement.	3.60	0.89	0.722	5.232		
<i>Intention to visit</i>					0.852	0.659
I would like to visit this place in the future.	4.06	0.93	0.731	22.316		
It is likely that I visit this place in the future.	3.55	1.12	0.853	48.494		
I will intend to visit this place in the future.	3.23	1.10	0.846	38.447		

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Note: All t-values are significant at the 0.01 level; all items measured on a 5-point scale

Table 2. Discriminant Validity: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
(1) Place identity	-							
(2) Place dependence	0.612							
(3) Positive affect	0.462	0.346						
(4) Escape	0.382	0.312	0.230					
(5) Excitement	0.331	0.193	0.250	0.625				
(6) Learning	0.203	0.291	0.139	0.523	0.456			
(7) Relaxation	0.163	0.164	0.189	0.651	0.570	0.610		
(8) Imagination proclivity	0.404	0.251	0.485	0.222	0.196	0.196	0.119	
(9) Intention to visit	0.453	0.419	0.349	0.323	0.516	0.385	0.266	0.226

Table 3. Assessment of the Measurement Model for Second-Order Constructs

<b>Constructs</b>					
<b>Formative measure</b>		<b>Weight</b>	<b>t-Value</b>	<b>VIF</b>	
<i>Place attachment</i>	Place identity	0.718	5.826	1.280	
	Place dependence	0.437	2.924	1.280	
<b>Reflective measure</b>		<b>Loading</b>	<b>t-Value</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>AVE</b>
<i>Motivation</i>	Escape	0.785	22.340	0.852	0.591
	Excitement	0.812	35.643		
	Learning	0.692	17.323		
	Relaxation	0.780	23.427		

Note: VIF=variance inflation factor; CR= composite reliability; AVE= Average Variance Extracted; All loadings and weights are significant at the 0.01 level

Table 4. Estimates of Path Coefficients and Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Main effects model		Interaction model		Supported?
	Path coefficient	t-value	Path coefficient	t-value	
H <sub>1</sub> : Place attachment → Intention to visit	0.286	6.933***	0.269	6.374***	Yes
H <sub>2</sub> : Positive affect → Intention to visit	0.135	2.450*	0.104	2.497*	Yes
H <sub>3</sub> : Motivation → Intention to visit	0.279	6.958***	0.277	6.860***	Yes
H <sub>4a</sub> : Place attachment x Imagination proclivity → Intention to visit			0.128	3.187**	Yes
H <sub>4b</sub> : Positive affect x Imagination proclivity → Intention to visit			-0.296	6.540***	Yes
H <sub>4c</sub> : Motivation x Imagination proclivity → Intention to visit			0.191	2.721**	Yes
R <sup>2</sup>	0.276		0.398		

Note: \* Significant at the 0.05 level; \*\* Significant at the 0.01 level; \*\*\* Significant at the 0.001 level