

## Article

# Critical Influences on Responsible Tourism Behavior and the Mediating Role of Ambivalent Emotions

Hsin-Hui (Sunny) Hu  and Yung-Kun Sung \* 

Department of Hospitality Management, Ming Chuan University, Taoyuan City 333, Taiwan; sunny@zeta.mcu.edu.tw

\* Correspondence: yksung@mail.mcu.edu.tw

**Abstract:** This research employed a behavioral model to confirm and elucidate the critical influence of place attachment, destination involvement, and ambivalent emotion on responsible tourism behaviors. A total of 415 questionnaires were collected from tourists visiting Penghu Island in Taiwan. Following data analysis using structural equation modeling, the results suggested that place attachment, destination involvement, and ambivalent emotion critically impact responsible tourism behaviors, and that place attachment is negatively related to ambivalent emotion. In addition, ambivalent emotion was found to mediate the relationship between place attachment and responsible tourism behaviors. Finally, implications for the promotion of sustainable tourism development were thoughtfully provided based on these findings.

**Keywords:** place attachment; destination involvement; ambivalent emotion; responsible tourism



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## 1. Introduction

Prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism sector was an important driver of economic growth and job creation around the world, accounting for approximately 10% of the GDP and 1 in every 10 jobs globally [1]. However, excessive tourism growth has led to numerous impacts at destinations in many countries, including overcrowding, destruction of heritage and the environment, and detrimental social changes. As the world prepares to emerge from lockdowns and travel restrictions in the post-COVID-19 era, responsible tourism is more important than ever. The goal of responsible tourism is to minimize and/or reverse the negative effects of travel on resources, the environment, and local communities. Responsible tourism has received greater research attention, and several studies have found that discrepancies exist between the attitudes and actual behavior of responsible tourists [2,3]. Thus, there is a critical need to identify the factors which (1) affect the behavior of tourists and (2) encourage tourists to behave responsibly.

According to Aristotle's theory of rhetoric on emotion, emotion has a crucial influence over an individual's actions and decisions but is highly ambivalent in the content of character [4,5]. Previous research [6] has reported that individuals can experience positive and negative emotions simultaneously, and that this emotional ambivalence thus influences the accuracy of decision making (judgment) [7]. However, earlier studies have mainly focused on either the positive or the negative emotions of tourists; they did not investigate emotional ambivalence [8–10]. Separate evaluations of positive or negative constructs (the bipolar scales) do not provide clear evidence regarding mixed (i.e., positive and negative) emotional responses and prevent researchers from measuring the coexistence of positive and negative emotions. Bipolar scales define positive and negative emotions as mutually exclusive (i.e., they cannot be felt simultaneously) [11,12]. However, in reality, mixed emotions do exist, and responsible tourists often feel both positive and negative emotions at the same time when considering the sustainable development of tourism and other related topics, such as social bonding, cultural reservation, and community involvement. These

mixed emotions indicate that positive and negative emotions are independent, unipolar, and inclusive [12]. Therefore, there is a crucial need to understand how responsible tourism behaviors are influenced by tourists who exhibit mixed emotions.

Understanding the degree of tourist attachment to a place is essential in predicting desirable tourist behaviors [13]. Knowing the level of a tourist's destination involvement is also important in evaluating and predicting consumer behaviors [14]. These two constructs drive the behavior intentions and consumer behavior of tourists [15]. By simultaneously assessing place attachment and destination involvement, cognitive components which lead to responsible tourism behavior can be identified.

A recent meta-analysis [3] comprehensively reviewed 125 research articles pertaining to responsible tourism and found that there is a critical need to investigate the antecedents and implications of responsible tourism. In particular, the authors recommended that future studies should explore and advance this research in the Asia-Pacific, as this is the fastest-growing tourism and travel region. The meta-analysis also noted that an understanding of causal variables and practices pertaining to responsible tourism remains limited [3]. To address these knowledge gaps, the current study employed a cause-effect model to describe and explain responsible tourism in tourist destinations. The current study also (1) investigated the impacts of place attachment and destination involvement on responsible tourism behaviors and (2) explored the mediating role of ambivalent emotions. To achieve these research objectives, we developed a comprehensive model to assess how place attachment and destination involvement affect responsible tourism when tourists feel emotionally ambivalent. This model considered cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Responsible Tourism Paradigm

Responsible Tourism was defined as “making better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit” at the 2002 Cape Town Conference. “Responsible Tourism requires that operators, hoteliers, governments, local people and tourists take responsibility, take action to make tourism more sustainable”. Furthermore, “it is about identifying the important issues locally and addressing those, transparently reporting progress towards using tourism for sustainable development”. The above definitions of responsible tourism, i.e., the Cape Town Declaration, are currently embraced and were endorsed by the World Travel Market in 2007 for World Responsible Tourism Day [16].

Scholars have acknowledged the concept of responsible tourism as a general principle that decreases the harmful impacts of tourism and benefits a tourist destination's culture, economy, environment, and society [17–19]. Responsible tourism plays a critical role in promoting destination sustainability and improving the quality of life for local community residents [19]. The goals of responsible tourism include creating a better place for locals to live and tourists to visit [20]. Previous studies that investigated concepts related to responsible tourism included (but were not limited to) alternative tourism, appropriate tourism, cultural tourism, community-based tourism, ecotourism, ethical tourism/travel, fair tourism, green tourism, high-end tourism, nature-based tourism, sustainable tourism, and volunteer tourism [18,21–23].

Mody et al. [23] developed a responsible tourism paradigm in which responsible tourism was more generally defined as “a way of doing business; not a type of tourism per se”. Under this paradigm, responsible tourism could be applied to all types of tourism to achieve economic, environmental, and cultural benefits. In other words, responsible tourism is an umbrella term that covers diverse forms of tourism.

In 2016, Camilleri noted an increase in the number of small-scale establishments that provide overnight accommodations at responsible tourism destinations, supporting the notion that responsible tourism can increase local travel and boost hospitality businesses. Samaddar et al. [24] recently interviewed tour operators in India and found that tourists who attended cultural activities, purchasing local exotic handicrafts and interacting with local people, were good examples of well-executed responsible tourism. The selected tour

operators also provided tour packages that were environmentally and socially responsible so that tourists visiting India could gain an understanding of responsible behavior and act accordingly. Lee et al. [18] suggested that the study of responsible tourism has been focused on tourism product suppliers, local businesses, governments, and residents. Tourists, on the other hand, have received far less attention from researchers.

It is generally considered to be the responsibility of tourists to engage in responsible tourism (i.e., to behave in economically, socially, culturally, and environmentally responsible ways) because they play the double roles of both consumers and participants in responsible tourism [18,25]. Economic issues pertaining to responsible tourism involve ensuring that residents receive commercial benefits and fair compensation for providing local goods, products, and services. Social issues pertaining to responsible tourism involve treating residents or communities as equals. Cultural issues pertaining to responsible tourism involve respecting local traditions, customs, beliefs, and lifestyles. Environmental issues pertaining to responsible tourism involve preserving local natural resources and the sustainable development of tourist destinations. Gong et al. [26] suggested that researchers should adopt a more practical approach when studying responsible tourism. Those researchers described responsible tourist behaviors as actions that protect the local environment, respect local people, benefit local communities, contribute to tourism sustainability, diminish harmful impacts on the destination, and improve destination resilience. Accordingly, the current study investigated responsible tourism through the lens of four related and practical themes: economic responsibility, social responsibility, cultural responsibility, and environmental responsibility.

## 2.2. Place Attachment

The concept of place attachment is described as follows: when individuals and groups relate to a place, the nature of psychological interactions that occur in that place is important to them. Scholars have commonly acknowledged that place attachment is a multidimensional concept [27,28] that includes people, psychological processes, and place dimensions [29]. Furthermore, place attachment carries the psychological meaning that is developed through the accumulation of tourism experience. Most researchers evaluate place attachment using two widely examined constructs: place identification and place dependence [30–32]. Indeed, place attachment was originally and commonly conceptualized as place dependence [33] and place identification [34]. However, a more simplified conceptualization describes place attachment as a bond to a physical place rather than a bond to people (the latter is better described as community attachment) [35].

In the tourism field, place identification originated from place identity [27], and both terms are used interchangeably by researchers [36,37]. Scholars have defined place identity as a type of self-identity that includes attitudes, feeling, ideas, memories, preferences, values, and experiences associated with places that can fulfill the psychological, social, and cultural needs of an individual [38]. Place identity (1) describes the deep connection between a place and personal identity and (2) refers to an emotional attachment that reflects the symbolic importance a given place has to a specific individual [39]. Conversely, place dependence is a type of functional attachment that refers to the physical importance of a place in offering conditions and features that are suitable for an individual's desired activities or particular goals [39,40]. The term place dependence was previously defined as a positive evaluation of a place based on its ability to meet personal needs and help one achieve their goals [41]. Furthermore, an individual who feels greater place dependence towards a given location has evaluated that location more favorably than alternative locations and is more likely to remain there [42]. In summary, both place identification and place dependence are vital in conceptualizing the sub-constructs of place attachment.

## 2.3. Destination Involvement

The concept of destination involvement is described as “the meaning that tourists ascribe to a destination and how it serves as a central aspect of their lives, providing both

hedonic and symbolic value” [43]. Destination involvement is a variable that not only varies among individuals but also depends on a person’s assessment of their connection to a destination; thus, it is not inherent to a specific destination [43]. A high level of involvement invokes high absorption and strong belonging [44]. The destination involvement a tourist feels is determined by their interests [45]. This involvement can be regarded as the level of interest or importance that a tourist ascribes to a given destination [46]. Studying the involvement of tourists could benefit marketing organizations as well as the management of tourist destinations [47].

Destination involvement is conceptualized as the meaning and importance tourists attribute to a destination. More specifically, destination involvement should be considered a multi-dimensional construct that represents an individual’s psychological connection to a destination. In studying destination involvement, multifaceted scales are better than unidimensional scales because they (1) enable the evaluation of specific influences of diverse components of involvement on behavior (i.e., responsible tourism) and (2) enable the identification of the different facets of involvement to diminish respondent resistance [48]. In addition, identifying and developing the construct of involvement can provide useful information about the many different needs (e.g., pleasure), attitudes (e.g., signs), and lifestyles (i.e., centrality) of individuals [49,50]. Thus, in the current study, destination involvement was conceptualized as a multidimensional construct comprising visiting pleasure, centrality to lifestyle, and signs of self-expression.

#### 2.4. Ambivalent Emotions

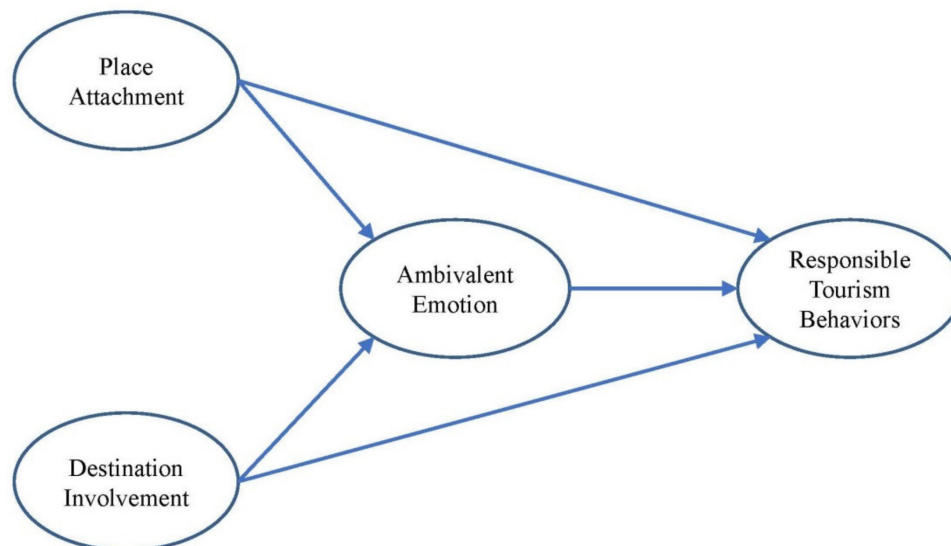
The theory of ambivalent emotion includes the early definition of ambivalent attitude, which refers to individuals feeling ambivalent emotions toward an object, i.e., they process both positive and negative evaluations toward an attitude object [51]. Ambivalence is the psychological state of having simultaneous, conflicting reactions, beliefs, emotions, or feelings toward an object [52]. Ambivalent attitudes were originally defined in relation to cognitive evaluation (i.e., cognitive conflicts/conflicting thoughts), emotion (i.e., affective conflicts/conflicting feelings), or both (i.e., cognitive/affective conflicts) [53]. However, one empirical study [54] found that ambivalent attitudes manifest in emotions but not in cognitive evaluations. Hence, ambivalent emotions that only represent the affective domain are more suitable for consideration in this study. The above statements refer to situations in which an individual experiences (1) “mixed feelings/emotions” toward a more general target (e.g., things, ideas, and people) or (2) conflict, contradiction, uncertainty, or indecisiveness. In other words, individuals find themselves feeling torn between the positive and negative aspects of objects.

Hosany and Prayag [55] used cluster analysis to uncover five types of emotional response patterns in tourists: delight (positives), passion (positives), negatives, unemotional (indifferences), and mixed (levels of both positive and negative emotions). Previous studies investigated the effects of positive emotions and/or negative emotions separately [9,12,56]. Previous studies on emotional indifference identified studies pertaining to mental health, such as Alzheimer’s disease [57] or Parkinson’s disease [58], but did not identify studies pertaining to the tourism context. More importantly, scholars have reviewed the extant literature and concluded that studies which investigated the combined effects of mixed emotions are scant [59]. Specifically, few studies investigated the effects of ambivalence on behavioral intention [60], and current studies on ambivalence investigated the decision-making of family-run firms [61], green purchase intentions [60], human rights [62], reservations in luxury restaurants [63], mobile shopping carts [64], service experience [59], and teaching children with ADHD [65]. In other words, although a number of ambivalence studies have been conducted within the scope of business, education, service, sociology, and hospitality, there are few studies on ambivalence within the context of tourism and travel. As the responsible behavior of tourists toward specific issues is related to their ethical judgment [18], ambivalence about responsible tourism was another key focus of our study.

Emotions play a critical role in understanding and predicting the behaviors of tourists [7]. Examples of positive and negative emotions surrounding responsible tourism include those in research published by Su and Hsu [66]. In that study, Chinese tourists felt both positive and negative emotions (from joyful and happy to upset and angry) toward natural heritage tourism because of the differences in local services, such as service providers treating all tourists courteously but being unable to impartially share information with them. Loda and Macri [67] also explained the dilemma of tourist responsibilities. For example, responsible tourism is an opportunity to progress and achieve well-being; however, it can also increase the damage to natural and cultural heritage. Another example includes tourists having the freedom to move but having their entry restricted in specific areas. Loda and Macri also found that (1) although most tourists liked direct interaction with local residents, less than half of those tourists chose to use services of local guides and (2) half of tourists acknowledged the consumption of local products, yet few of them bought local craft products. In addition, Caruana et al. [68] interviewed 16 responsible tourists who explained their awareness of positive and negative impacts while engaging in responsible tourism behaviors. The respondents' narratives reflected the ambiguities and difficulties of "travel experiences that also benefit communities and conservation". This dilemma exists because, although a broad set of tourist interactions can benefit local economics, those interactions can also damage social, cultural, and environmental resources. Taken together, the evidence demonstrates that tourists express mixed emotions toward responsible tourism.

## 2.5. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses Development

Based on our literature review, the authors established a research model to examine the causal relationships among place attachment, destination involvement, ambivalent emotion, and responsible tourism. This research model is illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Model.

According to the attachment theory, attachment is a basic human need in which people have an emotional connection to a place or environment [69,70]. Furthermore, attachment is a pivotal factor that leads to emotional conflict (i.e., strong positive and negative emotions) when an individual is highly attached to an organization [71]. Scholars have also proposed that attachment to a brand can cause consumers to experience conflicting emotions if they learn about unethical behavior by the company that manufactures that brand [71]. Attachment can also cause consumers to feel emotional ambivalence. For example, a recent study found that consumers who are attached to luxury restaurants exhibited mixed emotions when reserving a table due to COVID-19 concerns [63]. Li et al. [72] interviewed homeowners and found that ambivalent perceptions exist in the social, economic, and



physical dimensions of place attachment. Io [56] recently reviewed related literature and reported that emotions of tourists are seldom investigated alongside place attachment (however, note that Io's research only focused on positive emotions). Another early study identified a significant negative relationship between attachment style and unpleasant feelings in adult psychotherapy patients [73].

Ambivalence is considered to be an unpleasant feeling [74,75] or simultaneous pleasant and unpleasant feelings [76]. Thus, the current study proposed that attachment to a tourist destination should influence the ambivalence of tourists toward conducting responsible tourism, as follows:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1).** *Place attachment impacts ambivalent emotions toward responsible tourism.*

According to the cognitive appraisal theory, the concept of involvement is commonly considered to be an antecedent of emotions pertaining to tourism experiences [77,78]. Involvement is also commonly considered to be a motivating factor or a causal variable [14,79]. More specifically, the level of consumer involvement may impact consumption-related emotions [80]. Early literature proposed that both involvement and emotion influence the behavior of tourists [15]. A recent study that involved a rigorous content analysis further confirmed that involvement and emotions correlate with integrated tourism experiences in tourism settings [81]. Another previous study found that during visits to four Porto wine cellars, the consumer experience of involvement had a significant impact on destination emotions and included both positive and negative effects [78]. Based on our review of the literature, we hypothesized that destination involvement should affect ambivalence toward practicing responsible tourism:

**Hypothesis 2 (H2).** *Destination involvement impacts ambivalent emotions toward responsible tourism.*

Little is known about the combined effects of mixed emotions [59]. Researchers have investigated the influences of ambivalence on booking hotels online [82], mobile shopping [64], buying green products [51], and booking luxury restaurants online [63]. Huang et al. [64] explained that emotional ambivalence can cause individuals to hesitate when making decisions. Individuals can also feel indecisive about certain behaviors. In this study, the concept of responsible tourism refers to the individual responsibility of tourists to make consumer choices that lead to positive economic, social, cultural, and environmental effects on tourist destinations [19]. Most tourists believe that responsible tourism is a noble idea but are not sufficiently motivated to adapt their travel plans to be more environmentally sustainable [83,84]. An early study [85] showed that ambivalence is negatively correlated with the intention to engage in pro-environmental behaviors. One explanation stated that ambivalent attitudes arise when individuals are not completely convinced about the urgent need for environmental protection. A recent study also found that anticipated emotions, both positive and negative, have significant impacts on the environmentally responsible behavior of tourists in heritage tourism settings [86]. In the context of this study, simultaneously perceived positive and negative attributes generate conflicting thoughts that lead to inconsistent and dissonant feelings toward responsible tourism. Hosany et al. [7] suggested that positive and negative emotions display distinct and asymmetrical effects on the behavior of tourists. Accordingly, we hypothesized that a relationship exists between emotional ambivalence and responsible tourism:

**Hypothesis 3 (H3).** *Ambivalent emotion has negative effects on responsible tourism behaviors.*

Previous studies empirically examined environmentally responsible behaviors and found that they arise from leisure involvement [87], tourist involvement [88], and place attachment [27]. Moreover, Lee [89] employed a behavioral model and found that both recreation involvement and place attachment had positive impacts on environmentally

responsible behavior in nature-based tourism focused on wetlands. A recent study also confirmed that involvement and place attachment had positive effects on environmentally responsible behavior in a popular tea tourist destination [90], and Cheng et al. [27] found that, when island tourists were attracted to a destination, they tended to behave in environmentally responsible ways. This evidence demonstrates that attachment and involvement may be necessary to interpret the experiences of tourists and explain their behaviors.

For the current study, we expanded the concept of environmentally responsible behavior (defined as actions that promote sustainable development, protect natural environments, or diminish the use of natural resources) to include concepts of responsible tourism (defined as actions that decrease the harmful impacts of tourism or contribute to the tourism destination with respect to culture, economy, environment, and society). Our literature review identified a research gap in the new paradigm of responsible tourism; consequently, the following two hypotheses were proposed:

**Hypothesis 4 (H4).** *Place attachment has positive effects on responsible tourism behaviors.*

**Hypothesis 5 (H5).** *Destination involvement has positive effects on responsible tourism behaviors.*

#### 2.6. The Mediating Role of Ambivalent Emotions on Responsible Tourism

Modified versions of the cognitive-affective-behavioral (CAB) model [91,92] have been used by many scholars [93,94]. This model offers a foundation to verify the causality among attachment, involvement, ambivalence, and responsible tourism. Jing and Rashid [9] explained that “affect is an umbrella of several mental processes, including emotions, moods, and possibly attitudes”. Based on extant marketing, psychology, and tourism literature, scholars [95] have suggested that emotional responses may (1) exist as independent variables or (2) play a mediating role between cognition and outcome variables, such as behavioral intention. Therefore, emotional ambivalence may mediate the relationships between attachment and responsible tourism and between involvement and responsible tourism.

Tourism should be developed in a manner that is economically, environmentally, and culturally beneficial to tourist destinations [23]. To facilitate this type of sustainable tourism development, elucidating the mediating roles played by ambivalent emotions is critical. In this study, the two crucial indicators representing cognition (i.e., what an individual knows and thinks about a given destination) were place attachment and destination involvement. These indicators can lead to emotional ambivalence (which represents an effect, i.e., how an individual feels about a destination) and affect responsible tourism (which represents a set of behaviors). Accordingly, the following two hypotheses were proposed:

**Hypothesis 6 (H6).** *Place attachment has indirect effects on responsible tourism behaviors because of ambivalent emotions.*

**Hypothesis 7 (H7).** *Destination involvement has indirect effects on responsible tourism behaviors because of ambivalent emotions.*

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Data Collection

Questionnaires were distributed to tourists who visited Penghu Island, a popular tourist destination in Taiwan. Penghu Island is composed of 90 islands and is steeped in history and culture, with magnificent ocean views and many other natural wonders. Penghu archipelago is one of the three main volcanic groups in Taiwan, and most of the rock formation found on the islands is basalt. Also, abundant marine resources are found near Penghu [96]. Local and central governments are continually developing Penghu’s tourism industry by leveraging the island’s culture, history, and marine environment resources

to attract island tourists and gain a greater share of the individual tourist market [97]. Hence, Penghu is an ideal tourist destination for a responsible tourism study. Researchers used purposive sampling rather than random probability sampling in studies due to time or cost considerations. The survey was conducted between July and September 2018. Approximately 600 questionnaires were distributed (300 paper copies and 300 online copies). For the paper survey, visitors were contacted at the airport; for the online survey, respondents were contacted over social media before receiving the survey. A total of 415 valid copies were returned, resulting in a 69.1% response rate. Of the 415 participants, more than half were female (54.2%) and single (60.7%). Most of the respondents had a college education (54.3%) and were between 21–30 years old (41.2%), or 31–40 years old (28.9%). Approximately a quarter of respondents had a monthly income of NT (New Taiwan Dollar) 20,001–35,000 (25.4%) or NT 35,001–50,000 (23.8%). In consideration of research ethics, a signed informed consent form was obtained from all participants prior to the commencement of the study. Participation in this study was completely voluntary and participants were free to stop filling out the survey at any time and for any reason. Thus, by filling out the survey, participants agreed to participate in the study. It took about 10 min to complete the survey, with no compensation and no estimated risks involved in participating in this survey.

### 3.2. Measures

Questionnaire development was based on previous literature, and the instrument comprised four sections: place attachment, destination involvement, ambivalent emotion, and responsible tourism. Responses to each item were scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Place attachment was measured using eight items from Cheng, Wu, and Huang [27]; Lee [89]; and Prayag and Ryan [98]. Specifically, we measured two dimensions of place attachment: place identification and place dependence, each of which included four items. Destination involvement was measured using items related to three dimensions: pleasure, centrality, and sign (from [99]), with each dimension including three items. To measure ambivalent emotion toward responsible tourism, three items were adapted from Chang [51]. Eleven items pertaining to responsible tourism behavior were modified from work by Del Chiappa, Grappi, and Romani [100]. Demographic information included gender, age, marital status, education level, occupation, and monthly income.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Evaluation of the Measurement Model

We first evaluated the measurement model in AMOS using maximum likelihood. We then performed a confirmatory factor analysis to test the validity of the scales. Table 1 summarizes the factor loadings, composite reliability, and the Average Variances Extracted (AVE). The factor loadings of all indicators presented in Table 1 exceeded 0.5 (range: 0.51 and 0.94) and were significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), which supports the validity of the indicators [101]. In evaluating the level of internal consistency of the measurement scale, the composite reliability of each construct was assessed. All Composite Construct Reliabilities (CCRs) were 0.89 or higher (greater than the cut-off value of 0.70), indicating that the measurement scale had a high level of internal consistency [102]. Moreover, all the AVEs constructs exceeded the threshold of 0.5, indicating convergent validity [102]. For each construct, we also considered the square root of the AVE as evidence of discriminant validity if this value was higher than the correlation among constructs [102]. As shown in Table 2, the square root of the AVEs for all constructs ranged from 0.82 to 0.94 (exceeding correlations among constructs); therefore, all constructs exhibited sufficient discriminant validity.



**Table 1.** Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results.

Constructs/Items	Loading	T-Value	Composite Reliability	AVE
<b>Place Attachment</b>			0.92	0.78
Penghu is meaningful to me.	0.68	13.65		
I identify strongly with Penghu.	0.79	14.70		
I am very attached to Penghu.	0.78	14.51		
I have a special connection with Penghu and other tourists who visit Penghu.	0.82	15.22		
I enjoy visiting Penghu more than visiting any other place.	0.77	14.36		
I get more satisfaction visiting Penghu than visiting any other place.	0.83	15.44		
Visiting Penghu is more important to me than visiting any other place.	0.80	14.87		
I would not substitute any other type of recreation for what I do in Penghu.	0.73	10.91		
<b>Destination Involvement</b>			0.91	0.73
I really enjoy visiting Penghu.	0.71	13.30		
Visiting Penghu is pleasurable.	0.76	14.03		
Visiting Penghu is very interesting.	0.74	13.64		
A lot of my life is organized around Penghu.	0.86	15.67		
Penghu has a central role in my life.	0.88	15.90		
A lot of my time is organized around Penghu.	0.83	15.16		
Visiting Penghu allows me to really be myself.	0.53	10.04		
Visiting Penghu says a lot about who I am.	0.67	13.30		
When I visit Penghu, others can see me the way that I want them to see me.	0.51	9.44		
<b>Ambivalent Emotion</b>			0.94	0.92
I have strong mixed emotions both for and against responsible tourism.	0.93	32.45		
I find myself feeling torn between the positive and negative sides of responsible tourism.	0.94	34.50		
I feel indecisive about responsible tourism.	0.91	30.95		
<b>Responsible Tourism Behaviors</b>			0.89	0.68
I respect the natural resources of Penghu.	0.68	10.91		
I limit the usage of natural resources.	0.65	10.52		
I limit the production of garbage.	0.55	9.33		
I use transportation that minimizes the impact on the environment.	0.64	10.45		
I am interested in several aspects and characteristics of the local community.	0.68	10.86		
I respect the people and their local traditions.	0.73	11.37		
I am in contact with the traditions and culture of the local community.	0.74	11.52		
I protect the historical and archeological sites of Penghu.	0.72	11.32		
I buy from local and typical merchants.	0.59	9.78		
I favor local businesses.	0.67	10.79		
I favor businesses that employ local workers.	0.58	9.65		

**Table 2.** Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations.

Variable	Mean	S.D.	PA	DI	AE	RTB
Place Attachment (PA)	3.74	0.78	0.88			
Destination Involvement (DI)	3.49	0.84	0.64 **	0.85		
Ambivalent Emotion (AE)	3.60	1.45	−0.16 **	−0.10 *	0.94	
Responsible Tourism Behaviors (RTB)	4.01	0.60	0.50 **	0.53 **	−0.11 *	0.82

Note: Off-diagonal values are correlations and on-diagonal values are the square root of AVE. \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

#### 4.2. Testing the Hypothesized Structural Model

To examine the relationships between place attachment, destination involvement, ambivalent emotion, and responsible tourism behaviors, the authors conducted an analysis of structural equation models with an overall goodness of fit test and a path analysis. Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations of place attachment, destination involvement,

ambivalent emotion, and responsible tourism behaviors as well as the correlations among variables. According to our structural analysis, the chi-square of the structural model was 1357.39 with a df of 414, a CFI of 0.90, an IFI of 0.90, and an RMSEA of 0.07. Results indicated that the data were a satisfactory fit [103].

According to Table 3, place attachment had a negative impact on ambivalent emotions ( $\beta = -0.26$ ,  $t = -3.46$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Specifically, tourists with higher place attachment displayed lower scores of ambivalent emotion. Thus, H1 was supported. However, contrary to H2, results indicated that destination involvement did not have significant effects on ambivalent emotion ( $\beta = -0.12$ ,  $t = -1.67$ ); thus, H2 was not supported. As expected, ambivalent emotions reduced responsible tourism behaviors ( $\beta = -0.17$ ,  $t = -3.91$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Tourists with higher ambivalent emotions reported lower responsible tourism behaviors, which supported H3. The anticipated relationship between place attachment and responsible tourism behaviors was significant and positive ( $\beta = 0.26$ ,  $t = 3.93$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This was consistent with H4, which stated that place attachment should increase responsible tourism behaviors. Our results also suggested that higher destination involvement increased responsible tourism behaviors ( $\beta = 0.47$ ,  $t = 6.38$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ); thus, H5 was supported.

**Table 3.** Structural Model Results.

Variables	Standardized Estimate	S.E.	C.R.
Place Attachment → Ambivalent Emotion	−0.26 **	0.31	−3.46
Destination Involvement → Ambivalent Emotion	−0.12	0.21	−1.67
Ambivalent Emotion → Responsible Tourism Behaviors	−0.17 **	0.01	−3.91
Place Attachment → Responsible Tourism Behaviors	0.26 **	0.07	3.93
Destination Involvement → Responsible Tourism Behaviors	0.47 **	0.05	6.38

\*  $p < 0.05$ . \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

#### 4.3. Mediation Analysis

The authors employed the percentile bootstrapping method and bias-corrected percentile bootstrapping at a 95% confidence interval with 2000 bootstrap samples to examine the indirect effects of ambivalent emotion on mediation models. Table 4 shows the SEs and critical ratios for these effects as well as the estimates and the 95% CIs (percentile and BC). As expected, the mediating effect of ambivalent emotions on the relationship between place attachment and responsible tourism behaviors was significant (indirect effect =  $-0.05$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), with a 95% percentile CI of  $-0.08$  to  $-0.01$  and a BC 95% CI of  $-0.09$  to  $-0.02$ . Therefore, in accordance with H6, tourists who develop place attachment were likely to display reduced ambivalent emotions and increased responsible tourism behaviors. However, ambivalent emotions did not appear to mediate the relationship between destination involvement and responsible tourism behavior (indirect effect =  $-0.02$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), given that the 95% percentile CI contained zero. Thus, H7 was not supported.

**Table 4.** Mediation of the Effect of Ambivalent Emotion.

Constructs	Bootstrapping					
	Product of Coefficients		Percentile 95% CI		BC95% CI	
Ambivalent Emotion	Point Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper
Place Attachment	−0.05	0.02	−0.08	−0.01	−0.09	−0.02
Destination Involvement	−0.02	0.01	−0.00	0.03	0.00	0.04

Note: BC, bias corrected; 2000 bootstrap samples.

## 5. Discussion, Conclusions, and Implications

The results of the hypotheses in the current study were discussed. Place attachment influenced ambivalent emotion toward responsible tourism; this finding is similar to the recent study [63] which found that restaurant attachment has impacted emotional ambivalence toward dining at luxury restaurants. However, destination involvement did not impact ambivalent emotions toward responsible tourism. This is the first finding. The reasonable explanation is that involvement is a positive perspective, thus it could not arouse mixed emotions. Moreover, ambivalent emotion had a negative impact on responsible tourism behavior. This result agreed with the previous study [85] which only investigated pro-environmental behavioral intentions. Last but not least, both attachment and involvement influenced responsible tourism behavior. These two results confirmed the early study [90]; however, it only researched environmentally responsible behavior. This study covers a greater more scope of responsible behaviors, i.e., those relating to culture, economy, and society.

Growing awareness of sustainable tourism development has led an increasing number of tourists to engage in responsible behaviors. The current study (1) expanded the findings of existing research pertaining to environmentally responsible behaviors [27,104,105], (2) expanded the scope of environmental issues to include responsible tourism behaviors, and (3) extended the cognitive-affective-behavioral model to explain the responsible behaviors of tourists. Results of the current research revealed that place attachment and destination involvement were valuable drivers of responsible tourism behaviors, which confirms previous research findings (e.g., [27,88]). However, this is the first study to show that the effect of place attachment on responsible tourism behaviors is mediated by ambivalent emotions. In addition, responsible tourism behaviors can be enhanced when tourists are attached to and involved in a destination. Nonetheless, destination involvement has a stronger influence than does place attachment, therefore, the involvement tourists feel towards a destination is directly connected to the responsible behaviors they engage in.

An additional contribution of the current findings relates to the effects of place attachment on ambivalent emotions toward responsible tourism. The empirical evidence of the current study revealed that place attachment is negatively correlated with ambivalent emotions. Previous studies have not provided consistent evidence on the association between place attachment and ambivalent emotions [63,73]. We found that tourists who are attached to a place are less likely to feel mixed emotions about that place, reducing ambivalent emotions toward responsible tourism. Moreover, we also found that ambivalent emotions negatively impact responsible tourism behaviors. This finding supports the results of a previous investigation [85] in which tourists who experienced both positive and negative emotions were less likely to engage in responsible behaviors.

We further examined the mediating role of ambivalent emotions in shaping the relationships between place attachment and responsible tourism behaviors. Our research demonstrated that an ambivalent attitude significantly mediates the relationship between place attachment and responsible tourism behaviors. No previous study has reported a similar finding, making this result an important contribution to the tourism literature. Furthermore, our study extended academic research pertaining to responsible tourism by highlighting the crucial cognitive and affective factors associated with responsible tourism behaviors.

### 5.1. Practical Implications

Examining the causal relationships among place attachment, destination involvement, ambivalent emotions, and responsible tourism behaviors can provide government administrators, tourism practitioners, and hospitality operators with practical strategies to encourage responsible tourism. The results indicate governments should develop responsible tourism strategies and budgets that enhance place attachment and destination involvement, which should, in turn, reduce ambivalent emotions and increase responsible tourism behaviors. Local governments should provide vivid and abundant information to

the media to establish connections between a destination and possible tourist experiences to promote place attachment. Local tourism and hospitality news, cultural events, and social activities are great tools to pique the interest of individuals and promote responsible tourism. Local restaurants and accommodation providers can also use the internet to promote the experiences they offer, increasing place attachment and responsible tourism behaviors. Media can also be leveraged to increase tourist interest in environmental protection and sustainability.

Images of responsible tourism could be created and promoted by public offices and local businesses to encourage destination involvement. Local governments can provide information through online media that showcases visiting pleasure, centrality to lifestyle, and signs of self-expression to attract potential visitors. At the same time, tour operators can offer local tour guide services that encourage responsible tourism among first-time visitors. Repeat visitors, who usually hold deeper concerns about responsible tourism behaviors, can also be encouraged to attend social activities, stay in different homestays, buy folk art/handicrafts, enjoy local foods/drinks, interact with local people, and even regularly participate in local cultural events. Word-of-mouth marketing via social media accounts by repeat visitors may in fact be the best way to advertise responsible tourism.

Governments and businesses should provide clear and precise information and news to the public to help reduce ambivalent emotions by encouraging attachment, thus increasing responsible tourism. This information should (1) be related to the identification and dependence of tourists (i.e., their lifestyle) and (2) reduce concerns about difficulties associated with responsible tourist behaviors. The focus of government, tourism administrators, practitioners, and operators should be on diminishing negative emotions and enhancing positive emotions by increasing tourist attachment to a destination. This approach will help regulate mixed emotions and thereby allow tourism to make meaningful contributions to economic, social, cultural, and environmental sustainability. Currently, in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic—a global health crisis—SoLoMo (Social-Local-Mobile) marketing strategies could be suggested to promote responsible tourism through digital technology. That is to say, online shops, mobile apps, and/or social media should be implemented by local governments and businesses to preserve sustainable operations in travel, tourism, and hospitality.

## 5.2. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies

While this study makes valuable theoretical and practical contributions, some limitations should be noted. First, in providing empirical evidence pertaining to critical factors that influence responsible tourism behaviors, we focused on a sample of domestic tourists of an island destination. Our research model should be tested in international tourist destinations to elucidate how cultural differences affect ambivalence toward responsible tourism and responsible tourism behaviors. Second, the current study emphasized the effects of place attachment and destination involvement on responsible tourism behavior. Future research should also consider the impact of personal factors, such as ethics. Finally, the COVID-19 crisis has dramatically changed tourist behavior. For example, online media have become more important tools in promoting and facilitating responsible tourism behavior. Therefore, future studies should explore the effects of media on ambivalence toward responsible tourism behaviors.

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**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Ethical review and approval were waived for this study due to: A: Our questionnaires (survey questions) contain no sensitive personal questions (e.g., no questions about drug use, sexual behavior or sexual attitudes, criminal activity, academic grades, medical history) or other personal information that could stigmatize an individual. B: In our survey/project, no identifying information is recorded to link a person with the data such that it could reasonably harm the individual's reputation, employability, financial situation, or place them at risk for criminal or civil liability. C: The samplings in our project are not from a vulnerable or special population (e.g., pregnant women, prisoners, minors, cognitively impaired individuals). Our study do not involve with medical research and "Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study when they agreed to fill out the survey voluntarily".

**Informed Consent Statement:** To obtain informed consent from the participants (subjects), the research team provided an explanation of the purposes and procedure of this research at the beginning of the survey. Hence, by filling out the survey, subjects agreed to participate in the study. The subjects were assured that their responses would be anonymous and confidential.

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