The relationships among interpretation satisfaction, place attachment and environmentally responsible behavior in Shaanxi’s cultural heritage sites

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Background
Cultural heritage sites share information about the history and culture of a place. Interpretation helps visitors understand the meanings of the place and effective interpretation may influence environmentally responsible behavior (ERB). Some empirical studies found interpretation had significant impacts on environmental behavior and it helped people modify their behaviors. Past research in tourism found satisfaction with service quality enabled visitors to develop higher place attachment to a certain place and place attachment was a potentially important antecedent of environmentally responsible behavior. Based on the literature review, research relative to the three constructs was conducted in nature-based setting and the research findings are sometimes inconsistent. The purpose of this study was to understand the role of satisfaction with interpretation on place attachment & environmentally responsible behavior in historic settings (Figure 1).

Possible findings
Based on literature reviews, it is anticipated that
1) Interpretation satisfaction exerts a significant and direct impact on place attachment and both a direct and indirect impact on environmentally responsible behavior (ERB).
2) Place attachment possesses a significant and direct impact on ERB.

Satisfied with the interpretation, the visitors appreciate the place and as a result, they develop positive emotional bonds with the site and have an intention to exhibit ERB to protect the historic sites. The expected findings can influence management to contribute to the sustainable development of cultural heritage sites.

Significance
The study is significant as it:
1) Adds to the literature on interpretation by testing several variables in the same model highlighting the significance of interpretation outcomes for enhancing visitors’ experience, modifying visitors’ behavior and benefitting heritage management
2) Applies the theoretical constructs beyond nature-based setting.
3) Shares with practitioners a holistic understanding of the interpretation quality of the specific historic sites and enables them to serve visitors with high quality of interpretation.
4) Recognizes the visitors’ role in the sustainable development of cultural heritage sites.

Proposed methodology
Study area: Shaanxi province boasts 9972 tourism attractions and 9316 are cultural heritage attractions & account for 93.42% of the province's total tourism attractions (see location at right, Fig 2). Inappropriate visitor behavior, such as touching delicate surfaces, littering and vandalism, threaten the cultural heritage sites.

Study sites: 5 historic sites of the highest national level (5A) in Shaanxi province (See photos to the right)

On-site survey: Pre-test with 250 conducted spring 2015; revision & final implementation summer

Variable measures: 38 measures
Interpretation satisfaction 5 factors: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and education.
Place attachment 2 factors: place dependence and place identity.
Environmentally responsible behavior (ERB) 2 factors, on-site behavior and off-site behavior.

Data analysis: Structural equation modeling (SEM)

Figure 1: Proposed Model of Interpretation’s Impact on Place Attachment and Environmentally Responsible Behavior

Figure 2: Overview figure of China and major cities in Shaanxi (source http://www.chinahighlights.com/shaanxi/map.htm)