

## **Modeling the Relationship between Sense of Place, Social Capital and Tourism Support**

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### **Abstract**

The success of tourism development heavily depends on residents' support. Broader literature suggests sense of place and social capital are important precedents of residents' attitudes and behavior. However, limited attention has been paid to this topic in tourism, especially in Iran. Therefore, the aim of this research is to examine the relationship between sense of place, social capital and residents' attitudes toward tourism support. Data were collected from residents in the historic city of Shiraz, one of the main tourist destinations in Iran. A survey method based on a structured questionnaire was applied. Data analysis was conducted using a Structural Equation Modelling two-step approach. Results from 386 questionnaires indicated a positive significant relationship between sense of place and social capital, and sense of place and tourism support. However, social capital did not mediate the relationship between sense of place and tourism support. The research findings suggest that it is important for urban planners to take measures to maintain and improve the residents' place sense in order to gain their support for tourism. Further study is required to investigate the effect of social capital on residents' attitude towards support for tourism development.

### **Keywords**

Sense of place, social capital, support for tourism, structural equation modeling, Shiraz

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## **Introduction**

Tourism is an important tool for economic development and as a result, improvement of residents' quality of life. In order to succeed, tourism relies on support from local residents. There is an evidence that people bond with places which are assumed significant and will impact on their engagement in places (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). There is a number of concepts describing the relationship between people and spatial settings, but sense of place is perhaps the most general one (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001). Sense of place is people's bonding with settings. It is shaped by the meanings people create based on their experiences with a place (Amsden, 2007). The relationship between sense of place (and its related place-based concepts, especially place attachment) and behavior has been investigated in the literature (Walker & Ryan, 2008; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Chapin & Knapp, 2015). Prior research has conceptualized sense of place as a precedent of behavior. Sense of place has also been widely investigated in tourism contexts to explore visitors' attitudes or behaviors (Deutsch et al., 2013; Ramkissoon et al., 2013; Shim & Santos, 2014; Ram et al., 2016) or to study residents' attitudes towards tourism development or participation in tourism activities (Stedman, 2002; Gu & Ryan, 2008; Wang & Xu, 2015; Liu & Cheung, 2016).

Furthermore, people who live in places with strong physical identities are encouraged to interact more with each other and the environment and to build social capital (Dale, Ling, & Newman, 2008). A number of researches have investigated the relationship between sense of place and social capital (Lewicka, 2005; Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Dale et al., 2008; Jorgensen, 2010), but scant attention has been paid to this topic in tourism.

In addition to sense of place, social capital is a critical factor for public commitment to plans and the planning process (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). Therefore, many environmental initiatives attempt to apply social capital to pursue environmental objectives. Prior literature indicates that strong social networks lead to greater support for pro-

environmental policies (Dean et al., 2016). However, the studies that investigate the relationship between social capital and support for tourism are scarce.

Although there is an evidence for the relationship between sense of place, social capital, and behavior in the broader literature; to the authors' best knowledge, limited studies have been conducted on this topic in tourism context. Subsequently, using Structural Equation Modeling, the paper attempts to advance the knowledge in tourism by examining the relationship between sense of place, social capital and support for tourism in a historic tourist destination; Shiraz city. Shiraz is one the major tourism destinations in Iran and due to its historical and cultural identity, its residents have a strong sense of belonging to the city. This could be regarded as an opportunity for enhancing residents' social capital and obtaining their support for tourism development. Understanding such relationships identifies the critical factors in gaining support from local residents towards tourism development.

## **Literature Review**

### **Sense of Place: Concept and Dimensions**

The psychological dimensions of experiencing a place have been described under several umbrella concepts, of which sense of place is probably the most often referred to (Pretty et al., 2003; Soinia et al., 2012).

The theory of sense of place dates back to the early 1970s. Tuan defined sense of place as affective ties with the material environment (Deutsch et al., 2013). Sense of place has been identified with various psychological indicators (Deutsch et al., 2013). Jorgensen and Stedman (2001) conceptualized sense of place as an evaluation consisting of cognitions (place identity), affections (place attachment) and conations (place dependence). In addition, Deutsch et al. (2013) derived other three factors to examine sense of place, namely satisfaction, atmosphere and community.

In the following sections, these components are introduced in a short

summary.

**Place attachment.** Place attachment describes the emotional connections (both positive and negative) between people and a place (Amsden, 2007; Soinia et al., 2012). In a number of studies (Kyle et al., 2004; Kyle et al., 2005; Halpenny, 2010), in particular in the field of environmental psychology, place attachment is used interchangeably for sense of place (Liu & Cheung, 2016) and analyzed as having multiple dimensions comprising place dependence, place identity, place affect and place social bonding (Ramkissoon et al., 2013; Ram et al., 2016). However, previous literature suggests that there is a distinction between place attachment and concepts that are deemed to be its multiple facets (Amsden, 2007).

**Place identity.** Simply put, place-identity relates to the person's identity with respect to the environment (Proshansky, 1978). According to Breakwell (1986, cited in Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996; Wang & Xu, 2015), place-based identity includes four dimensions: Distinctiveness, continuity, self-esteem and self-efficacy. Distinctiveness deals with establishment of a sense of personal distinctiveness or uniqueness. The second principle of place identity is "the continuity over time and situation between past and present self-concepts" (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996, p. 207). If continuity of place-based self-concepts is preserved, then the identity is secured (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996; Wang & Xu, 2015). Self-esteem refers to a "positive evaluation of oneself or the group with which one identifies" (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996, p. 208). With regard to place, self-esteem will be inspired with the individual's valuation of the place membership (Gu & Ryan, 2008). This is why people feel proud due to living in a historic town (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996; Wang & Xu, 2015). Self-efficacy is defined as "an individual's belief in his or her capabilities to meet situational demands". With regard to environment, "... feelings of self-efficacy are maintained if the environment facilitates or at least does not hinder a person's lifestyle" (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996, p. 209).

Place dependence. Place dependence refers to “the goal-oriented behavioral component of residents’ sense of place” (Pretty et al., 2003, p. 275). This component concerns the potential of a place to meet the goals and needs of an individual or a group given an existing range of alternatives (Soinia et al., 2012; Chapin & Knapp, 2015). Therefore, in the tourism context place dependence could be viewed as the ability of a setting to provide desired experiences on its own and relative to other settings (Ramkissoon et al., 2013).

Place satisfaction. Satisfaction is considered to be “a summary judgment of the perceived quality of a setting” (Stedman, 2002, p. 564). In addition to general quality of place, some scholars stated that desire to stay is an important feature of place satisfaction, which can suggest if a place meets individual’s previous expectations of quality of life (Stedman, 2002; Lewicka, 2011; Liu & Cheung, 2016).

Social ties. “Connections within and between social groups create new place-based meanings and symbols” (Amsden, 2007, p. 9). According to Mesch & Manor (1998), the higher the number of close friends and neighbors that a person knows and live nearby, the higher the attachment to the neighborhood is probable.

Physical features. Although physical environment is implied in the definition of sense of place, research has paid more attention to the social components and overlooked the role of physical environment in creating attitudes to the place (Stedman, 2003). However, Stedman (2003) concluded that certain landscape attributes can predict certain meanings related to attachment and satisfaction.

### **Social Capital**

Social capital is depicted as factors that link members of society together (Dean et al., 2016). It is defined by aspects that can promote the society efficiency through making members’ coordination more easy (Lee et al., 2013). Social capital is positively associated with the active engagement of individuals in community development based on tourism (Hwang, 2012). Previous studies have highlighted the importance of power, trust, cooperation, community involvement,

community attachment and community participation in influencing community attitudes and support for tourism, all which are components of social capital (Park et al., 2015). Park et al. (2012, 2015) proposed four factors that comprise social capital of residents during the process of rural tourism development, including cooperation, norms, trust, and networks. Trust is shaped when “people feel they can have confidence in their neighbors and local organizations responsible for governing or serving their area”. Networks include “the density, frequency, and extension of the structure of people’s social relationship”. Norms are “the residents’ cooperation, reciprocity, and shared behavioral patterns” (Kang, 2006, p. 25). Cooperation is identified as “the glue that holds people together and keeps them connected to achieve shared goals” (Elkhashab, 2010, p. 37).

There are a number of studies that have investigated the relationship between sense of place and social capital (Lewicka, 2005; Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Dale et al., 2008; Jorgensen, 2010; Marumo, 2012). For example, Graham, Mason, & Newman (2009) stated that there are links between place attachment and place dependency (as subsets of sense of place) and social capital. Furthermore, Dallago et al. (2009) concluded that deep bond with the place of residence can influence social capital. However, there is dearth of research on the relationship between residents’ sense of place and social capital in tourism. Accordingly, based on the above discussions, the first hypothesis will be:

H1: Residents’ sense of place has a significant influence on their social capital.

### **Support for Tourism**

Local residents’ support can guarantee the success of tourism development (Choi, 2013). Due to the significance of community goodwill and cooperation for achieving tourism development goals, governments, policy makers and businesses should recognize residents’ attitudes and their willingness to support (Stylidis et al., 2014). Residents’ support for tourism has been operationalized by general

single items such as support for further development or willingness to pay a local tax for tourism development (Meyer, 2011).

Prior research has examined the relationship between sense of place and support for tourism development. They concluded that in addition to residents' perception of tourism impacts, sense of place can also affect their support for tourism development (Zhu et al., 2017). For example, Wang & Xu (2015) suggest place identity theories as a complement for social exchange theory that are useful tools in predicting residents' attitudes toward tourism. Therefore, the second hypothesis of the present study is:

H2: Residents' sense of place significantly affects their attitudes towards support for tourism.

In addition to sense of place, literature suggests that social capital can influence community support for pro-environment behaviour (Dean et al., 2016). Prior research also highlighted the relationship between networks of social capital and citizen involvement in local voluntary activities (Selman, 2001). Nevertheless, such a relationship has not been investigated deeply in tourism. In order to fulfill this gap, this study hypothesizes that:

H3: Residents' social capital significantly mediates the relationships between residents' sense of place and their attitudes towards tourism support.

Based on the above discussions, the hypothetical relations (H1, H2 and H3) between sense of place and residents' social capital and their attitudes toward support for tourism are shown in Figure 1.

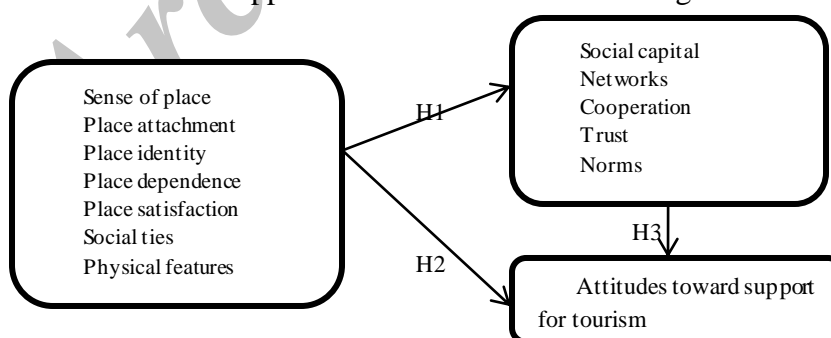


Figure 1. The theoretical model with expected relationships.

## **Research Methods**

### **Study Context**

Data were collected from residents of Shiraz, a metropolitan located in the southwest of Islamic Republic of Iran and the Fars Province capital. Although its history dates back to more than twenty centuries, it was considered as an important city in the medieval Islamic world (AD 1747–79). Due to the city's numerous cultural, historical and archeological attractions, Shiraz and the surrounding areas are one the major tourism destinations of Iran (Lonely Planet, 2012).

### **Measurement of Constructs**

The survey consisted of questions developed to capture the respondents' sense of place towards Shiraz city, their social capital and their support for tourism development. Following Jorgensen and Stedman (2001) and Deutsch et al. (2013), sense of place was considered to include place identity, place attachment, place dependence, place satisfaction, social ties and physical features of the setting. The measures used for each construct were mainly selected from previous studies, but some of them tailored to the specifications of the present study. The place attachment items were derived from previous literature (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Kyle et al., 2004; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2006); the place identity indicators were based on prior research (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Kyle et al., 2004; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2006; Wang & Xu, 2015); the place dependence variables were taken from previous studies (Kyle et al., 2004; Qian et al., 2011). It should be mentioned that according to definitions and conceptualizations reviewed, it appears that the concept of self-efficacy (place-identity component) seems similar to place dependence in that both of them refer to the appropriateness of place for following personal goals (except that self-efficacy does not comprise a comparative element). Therefore, due to their similarity, in the present study, the survey items related to self-efficacy are included under place



dependence. Place satisfaction measures are based on previous research (Stedman, 2002; Liu & Cheung, 2016). Social ties items are derived from past literature (Kyle et al., 2004; Kyle et al., 2005) but adapted to the present study requirements. Although the physical features construct was derived from previous studies (Deutsch et al., 2013), items used to measure it were self-generated.

There is an evidence that social capital comprises trust, cooperation, networks and norms, which are based on measures from Park et al., (2012) and Park et al. (2015).

**Table 1. Reliability Results from Pilot Survey**

Construct	Variable	Indicators	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Sense of place	Place attachment	(ATTA1) I feel relaxed in Shiraz.	0.86
		(ATTA2) Living in Shiraz makes me feel happy.	
		(ATTA3) Shiraz is my favorite place to be in.	
		(ATTA4) I am very attached to Shiraz.	
		(ATTA5) I really miss Shiraz when I'm away from it for a long time.	
Place identity	Place identity	(ID1) Shiraz reflects the type of person I am.	0.82
		(ID2) I feel that I can really be myself in Shiraz.	
		(ID3) I feel Shiraz is a part of me.	
		(ID4) I strongly identify myself with my city.	
		(ID5) I think Shiraz is a city with very distinctive features.	
		(ID6) Shiraz's attractiveness is very different from other cities I know.	
		(ID7) The lifestyle in Shiraz is very unique.	
		(ID8) The city of Shiraz always evokes strong memories in me.	
		(ID9) When someone appreciates Shiraz, it feels like a personal complimentary.	
		(ID10) If Shiraz is criticized in	

		media, I feel embarrassed.	
		(ID11) Living in Shiraz makes me feel very proud.	
Place dependence		(DEP1) The settings and facilities provided by Shiraz are appropriate for my activities.	0.78
		(DEP2) I prefer Shiraz over other cities for the activities that I enjoy most.	
		(DEP3) My personal capabilities and knowledge can be strengthened in Shiraz.	
Place satisfaction		(SAT1) I am satisfied with overall quality of life in Shiraz.	0.73
		(SAT2) I would never leave Shiraz for living in another city.	
Physical features		(PHY1) Shiraz has a beautiful architecture.	0.68
		(PHY2) Shiraz has a peaceful and relaxing atmosphere.	
		(PHY3) Shiraz has clean streets and alleys.	
		(PHY4) Shiraz has appealing landscape.	
		(PHY5) Pollution (air, noise and/or visual) do not disturb me in Shiraz.	
Social ties		(TIES1) My friends/family would be disappointed if I leave Shiraz for living in another city.	0.61
		(TIES2) I have a lot of friends/relatives in Shiraz.	
		(TIES3) Many of my friends/family prefer living in Shiraz over other cities.	
		(TIES4) I have a lot of fond memories with my family/friends in Shiraz.	
Social capital	cooperation	(COOP1) I usually participate in the events of my city.	0.71
		(COOP2) I often tend to do voluntarily jobs for my city in my spare time.	
		(COOP3) I tend to reflect my	

	opinions about city management to officials.	
norms	(NORM1) People in Shiraz have the attitude and tendency to obey the law. (NORM2) Most people in Shiraz respect each other's rights. (NORM3) Most people in Shiraz cooperate to develop our community. (NORM4) Most people in Shiraz solve conflicts together.	0.83
Trust	(TR1) I trust my city officials. (TR2) I think our nation is established on the basis of social morality. (TR3) I think social norms are well-established in Shiraz.	0.76
networks	(NET1) I often visit other cities to meet my friends/family. (NET2) I have many friends/families in other cities.	0.40
Support for tourism	(SUP1) I agree with further tourism development in Shiraz. (SUP2) Urban officials should promote investment in the city tourism industry. (SUP3) Number of tourists visiting Shiraz should increase. (SUP4) I agree with the presence of tourists in Shiraz. (SUP5) I tend to invest in Shiraz tourism industry. (SUP6) I am willing to participate and dedicate myself to support tourism development.	0.73

Finally, resident intention to support tourism is based on measures from Styliadis et al. (2014), Homsud and Promsaard (2015), Aligholizadeh Firoozjaie and Ghanbarzadeh Ashari (2016).

Consequently, 48 questions were developed (Table 1). All of the items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). In addition, three additional questions

regarding respondent age, gender and length of residency were included.

### **Pilot Survey and Data Collection**

The questionnaire was designed in English and then translated into Persian. Content validity was assessed using judgments from related experts. A primary study was conducted in July 2016. Thirty residents completed the pilot survey. To assess reliability, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was calculated using SPSS 22. In data reliability analysis, values of Cronbach's  $\alpha$  ranging from 0.6 to 0.7 are regarded as sufficient and a value of more than 0.7 is regarded as good (Wang et al., 2016). As reported in Table 1, the value for each scale was above 0.6 except for networks which was deleted from the study.

The main survey was distributed using Telegram messenger. Based on the Statistical Centre of Iran (2015) report, out of all the internet users (per 100 people), 52.1% people are based in urban areas of Iran. Besides, according to Pavel Durov, this app has over 40 million users in Iran; more than any other country in the world (Jafari, 2017).

Residents were asked to share the questionnaire to as many friends and groups they knew who lived in Shiraz for at least 18 years old. Finally, 384 questioners were completed in a sixteen-day period in August 2016. In order to have the opinion of those who did not use such applications, 100 intercept surveys were conducted in public areas from which 62 surveys were selected as complete and useful. Finally, 446 surveys were collected, and in the following stage, using SPSS 22 outliers in the data were identified and omitted. Consequently, 386 surveys were used for the analysis, which is a suitable sample size for conducting SEM. According to Adedeji et al. (2016) a sample of 200 or larger is considered to be adequate for SEM.

According to the responses, average length of residency in Shiraz was 28 years, with 1 year as minimum and 70 years as maximum length. The overall mean score for sense of place, social capital and support for tourism were 3/941, 2/955 and 4.45, respectively.

**Statistical Method**

Data analysis was performed with SEM, using AMOS20. SEM is a two-step approach, comprising estimation of measurement model and structural model (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). The first step involves testing the reliability and validity of the construct measurements and the overall fit of the measurement model using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) (Koç, Turan, & Okursoy, 2016). The following step comprises estimation of casual relationships between latent variables and hypothesis testing. The estimation method used is Maximum Likelihood (ML). Since SEM allows for both confirmatory and exploratory modelings, it is suited for theory testing and development (Capmourteres & Anand, 2016).

**Model Results****Data Screening**

An underlying assumption in SEM is that data are normally distributed and where this is not the case, statistical inference decreases (Zampetakis & Moustakis, 2006). Estimation in SEM with ML assumes multivariate normality or multinormality of continuous outcome variables (Klein, 2011). Due to complexity of multivariate normality, prior research often uses univariate normality. According to Klein (2011), many instances of multivariate non-normality are detectable through inspection of univariate distributions. He claimed that distribution with skewness greater than +3 or less than -3 and kurtosis greater than +10 and less than -10 is far from normality. Following recommendations of Klein (2011), data were tested for deviation from normality. According to results, the absolute values of skewness and kurtosis for all items were acceptable.

**Measurement Model**

Second-order and first-order CFAs were applied to consider the construct validity. First-order CFA was applied for the tourism constructs and second-order CFA was conducted for the sense of place and social capital constructs.

In this study, the reflective model has been employed. The reflective measurement is applied when the observed variables are assumed to be reflective of the prior theoretical latent construct (Baumann, Elliott & Hamin, 2011; Klein, 2015). All of the indicators in a reflective model share a common theme and are interchangeable (Coltman et al., 2008).

First step in conducting the CFA is to calculate indicator factor loadings. Table 2 shows that factor loadings for all items are above 0.5, which is the minimum acceptable value for standardized factor loadings. Moreover, the factor loadings can be used to indicate convergent validity of observable variables. According to Adedeji et al. (2016), in order to convergent validity be established, factor loadings of latent variables indicators should be above 0.4 and also be statistically significant. Accordingly, convergent validity of indicators is indicated.

Table 3 presents the statistical measures that test the sufficiency of the latent variables. All of the Composite Reliability (CR) values are above the threshold of 0.70, indicating that the latent variables are sufficiently reliable. Convergent validity was evaluated using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values. The AVE value should be equal to at least 0.5 to indicate convergent validity (Adedeji et al., 2016). Average Squared Variance (ASV) was used to test the discriminant validity of the measurement model. The ASV results need to be less than the AVE for the discriminant validity (Essmui et al., 2014).

**Table 2. Standardized Loadings (SL) and Squared Multiple Correlation (SMC) for Indicators' Confirmatory Factor Analysis.**

Indicator	SL	SMC	Indicator	SL	SMC
ATTA1	0.44	0.19	PHY3	0.7	0.49
ATTA2	0.76	0.57	PHY4	0.58	0.33
ATTA3	0.86	0.73	PHY5	0.75	0.56
ATTA4	0.77	0.59	TIES1	0.70	0.49
ATTA5	0.73	0.53	TIES2	0.75	0.56
ID1	0.8	0.64	TIES3	0.63	0.39
ID2	0.75	0.56	TIES4	0.81	0.65
ID3	0.86	0.73	COOP1	0.71	0.50
ID4	0.79	0.62	COOP2	0.80	0.64

Indicator	SL	SMC	Indicator	SL	SMC
ID5	0.64	0.40	COOP3	0.75	0.56
ID6	0.6	0.36	NORM1	0.86	0.73
ID7	0.50	0.25	NORM2	0.85	0.72
ID8	0.69	0.47	NORM3	0.78	0.60
ID9	0.73	0.53	NORM4	0.73	0.53
ID10	0.70	0.49	TR1	0.54	0.29
ID11	0.77	0.59	TR2	0.81	0.65
DEP1	0.74	0.54	TR3	0.81	0.65
DEP2	0.86	0.73	SUP1	0.87	0.75
DEP3	0.77	0.59	SUP2	0.88	0.77
SAT1	0.8	0.64	SUP3	0.81	0.65
SAT2	0.75	0.56	SUP4	0.77	0.59
PHY1	0.70	0.49	SUP5	0.41	0.16
PHY2	0.85	0.72	SUP6	0.54	0.29

Table 3. CR, AVE and ASV Values for Constructs.

	CR	AVE	ASV
Place attachment	0.84	0.52	0.03
Place identity	0.92	0.51	0.04
Place dependence	0.85	0.62	0.1
Place satisfaction	0.75	0.60	0.1
Physical features	0.84	0.52	0.03
Social ties	0.81	0.52	0.5
Cooperation	0.79	0.56	0.05
Norms	0.88	0.65	0.1
Trust	0.76	0.53	0.1
Support for tourism	0.86	0.54	

Table 4 shows the goodness-of-fit indices for sense of place, social capital and support for tourism dimensions. Overall, the measurement models show a good fit with the data. It should be noted that in this study normalized chi-square, derived from the ratio of chi-square to the degrees of freedom (CMIN/DF), was used to replace chi-square. Adedeji et al. (2016) stated that the chi-square is sensitive to the sample size, since the models of sample size larger than 200 are often rejected.

### Structural Model

The relationships between latent variables were tested through

estimation of the structural equation model (Figure 2). The model was modified, and the fitness was assessed. The  $\chi^2 = 1754.029$ ,  $df=947$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.85 (<3)$ , indicate that the hypothesized model is acceptable. Incremental Fitness Index (IFI), The Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and Comparative Fitness Index (CFI), are at 0.911, 0.902, and 0.911 ( $>0.9$ ), respectively. Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI) is 0.810 ( $>0.8$ ). The Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) of approximation is  $<0.08$  at 0.047. These indices indicate that the model is plausible.

**Table 4. Goodness-of-Fit Indices for Study Construct.**

	RMSEA	$\chi^2$	P-value	CMIN/DF	AGFI	RMR	IFI	CFI	TLI
Sense of place	0.057	857/080 (384)	000	2.332	0.837	0.055	0.916	0.915	0.903
Social capital	0.065	83/946 (32)	000	2.623	0.931	0.052	0.969	0.969	0.956
Support for tourism	0.065	20/947 (8)	0.007	2.618	0.95	0.006	0.990	0.990	0.981



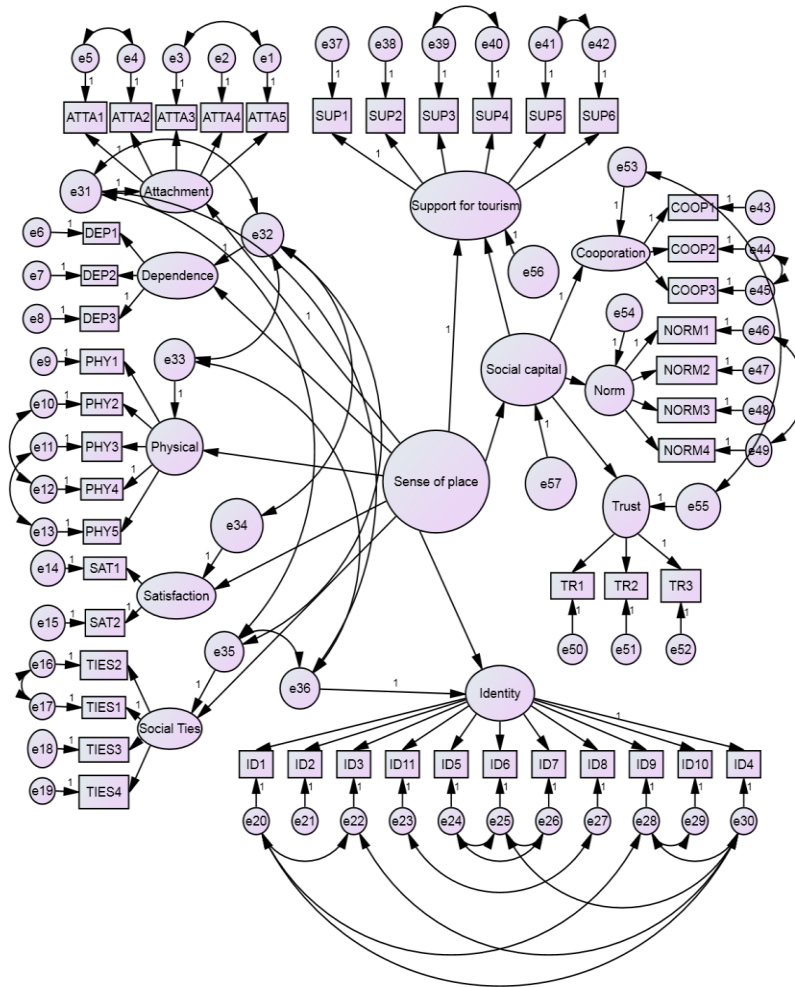


Figure 2. Structural equation model.

Table 4 lists the critical ratios of the trajectories between the items and their corresponding factors. According to the results, the sense of place path to social capital is highly significant with a critical value of 6.845 ( $> 1.96$ ). Therefore, the first hypothesis, stating residents' sense of place has a significant positive influence on their social capital, is confirmed.

Furthermore, the trajectory between sense of place and support for tourism is also significant. However, the path from social capital to

residents' support for tourism is not significant with a critical value of  $-5.941$  ( $<1.96$ ) and the negative value indicates the opposite relationship. Thus, the third hypothesis, considering the mediation role of social capital in the relationship between residents' sense of place and their attitudes towards tourism support, is rejected.

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesized path	Estimate	S.E	C.R	P-Value	Results
Social Capital ← sense of place	0.79	0.167	6.845	***	Supported
Support for Tourism ← sense of place	0.69				Supported
Support for Tourism ← Social Capital	-0.627	0.105	-5.941	***	Not supported

Note: S.E= Standard Error; C.R= Critical Ratio; \* The asterisks denote that P-value is Highly significant ( $P<0.0001$ ).

### Discussion and Conclusion

Although there is some evidence of the relationship between sense of place and support for tourism, limited studies have been conducted on the relationship between sense of place and social capital, as well as, social capital and residents' support in tourism sector, especially in Iran. Therefore, this study examined the relationships between residents' sense of place, their social capital and attitude towards support for tourism.

The empirical evidence supports that there is a significant positive relationship between Shiraz residents' sense of place and their social capital. The positive relationship between sense of place and social capital has been investigated in the environmental psychology literature previously (Stedman, 2003; Dale et al., 2008). Therefore, to enhance the community social capital, urban planners should pay specific attention to both the physical and the social bonds to a place.

Furthermore, residents' sense of place displays a significant relationship with their attitudes towards tourism support. Therefore,

inhabitants' positive evaluations of their place of residence can enhance their support for tourism development. This is aligned with Manzo and Perkins's (2006) argument about the importance of people's bonds to places in stimulating them to act collectively to preserve and improve their community. Therefore, these findings have important implications for urban tourism planners. Put simply, to achieve citizens' support for tourism, it is important that city planners and managers understand which attributes of the places are important for the residents, and that they attempt to preserve and improve these place issues. Consequently, a number of actions can be considered such as identifying and improving place attributes, which make the city more distinctive and attractive; providing services and facilities that can satisfy residents' functional, emotional and recreational needs; enhancing residents' standards of living and quality of life; maintaining and improving landscape beauty; engaging the city's cultural and historical elements into urban architecture, and minimizing pollutants. Eventually, due to the importance of the residents in brand building and the significance of their attitudes and behaviours in enhancing the appeal of destination, city and/or tourism planners and managers should make attempts to ensure residents' positive attitudes to the place (Wang & Xu, 2015).

With regard to the third hypothesis, opposite relationship was observed between residents' social capital and their intention for tourism support. Furthermore, social capital cannot mediate the relationship between Shiraz citizens' sense of place and their attitudes towards support for tourism. This result was not consistent with what was expected based on previous studies. According to the literature, social capital is considered to be a necessary condition for community development and sustainable tourism (Park et al., 2012; Park et al., 2015) and lack of social capital can influence public commitment to planning adversely (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). Furthermore, Lewicka (2005) observed that social capital can mediate the relationship between place attachment and local civic involvement.

The authors were not able to justify the reverse relationship between social capital and tourism support. Maybe this could be explained with

regard to Park et al.'s (2015) findings. Park et al. (2015) reported that social capital mediates the relationship between tourism socio-economic impacts and community support for tourism, and this relationship is stronger for residents with low social capital, compared to those with high social capital. They concluded that the low social capital group pays more attention to tourism economic impacts on their lives than the non-materialistic components of life, such as trust and social relations. Since a low level of social capital was observed in Shiraz, gaining residents' support for tourism development might be dependent on making the tourism benefits tangible in their lives. It is recommended that future studies examine this relationship more deeply and consider other variables such as perceived tourism impacts which might affect this relationship.

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