

# Role of horses and other aspects of wild nature in the image of the Camargue touristic natural area



This study associates the National Institute of Agronomic Research (INRA) and the National Institute for Horse and Riding (IFCE). It is financed by the IFCE.

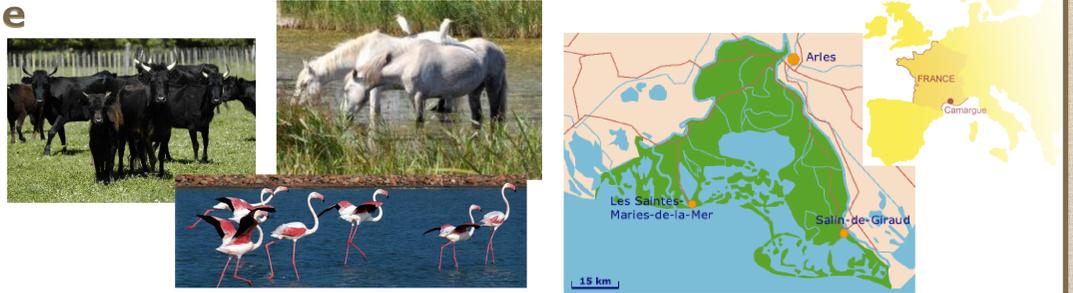
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**➔ This poster explores how wild nature and animals (specifically horses) can influence tourism development and marketing strategies in the context of natural areas**

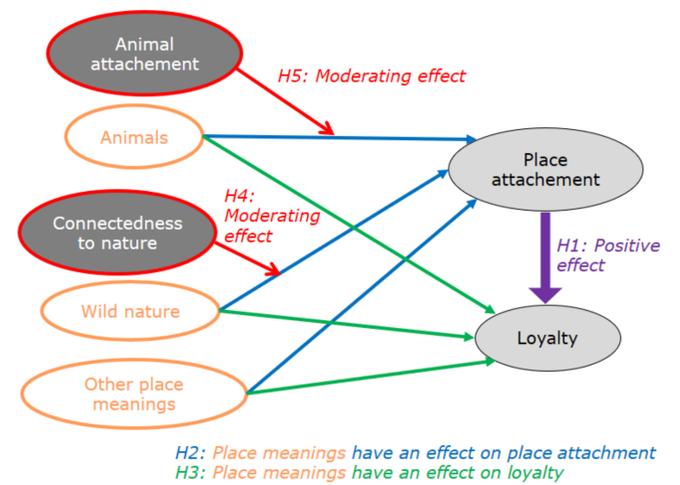
## The regional nature Park of Camargue

- Western Europe's largest river delta
- Exceptional biological diversity, home to unique breeds of horses, bulls, and 400 species of birds including Pink Flamingoes
- A popular touristic area with around one million tourists coming each year



## Theoretical model

- **Research question:** Analysis of tourists' behaviours with a specific emphasis on the effect of the presence of animals and wild nature
- **Consumer marketing literature:** concepts of place meanings (Kyle et al., 2005; Wynveen et al., 2012), place attachment (Yuksel et al., 2010; Kyle et al., 2005), destination loyalty (Yuksel et al., 2010; Ramkissoon et al., 2013), connectedness to nature and animal attachment (Mayer & Frantz, 2004; Gosling & Williams, 2010)
- > Large focus on motivations and behaviours of tourists towards natural environments but not on the relationship with the presence of animals or wild nature
- **Model and hypothesis:**



## Methodology:

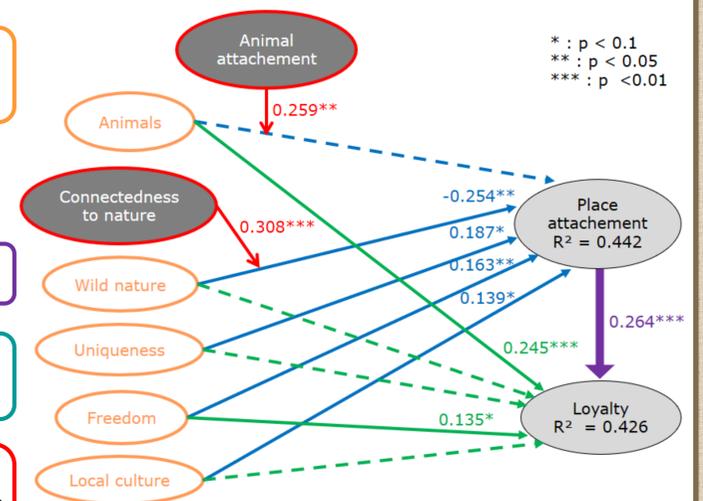
- 28 qualitative interviews -> identification of the meanings tourists ascribed to this place
- A quantitative survey among 205 visitors of the park -> confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling

## Results: place meanings

Place meanings: Animals (including horses, bulls, birds...), wild nature, uniqueness, freedom, local culture

## Results: structural model

- H1** Place attachment influences significantly loyalty
- H2** As some meanings become more salient, the individual develops a greater degree of attachment and loyalty
- H3**
- H4** Effect of animal attachment and connectedness to nature on place attachment through a moderation of the influence of the meanings related to the presence of animals and wild nature
- H5**



## Implications for Natural Park management:

- Differentiated marketing strategies should be used according to the type of tourists: focusing on animals will be useful for individuals attached to animals, focusing on wild nature will be useful for individuals connected to nature whereas the others will be more sensitive to freedom, uniqueness or local culture
- > likely to increase not only place attachment but also loyalty of park visitors

## Limitations and further research:

- This investigation focuses on only one natural park, the identification of place meanings is based on only 28 qualitative interviews, loyalty is measured through behavioural intentions rather than actual behavior, no distinction between international (14% of the respondents) and domestic tourists is done whereas foreigners' loyalty may suffer from geographical or financial constraints
- Future research could consider adding other variables to the model, such as customer satisfaction and test the influence of other moderating variables of place meanings' effect on place attachment and loyalty