

# Driving Ecotourism Intention in The Era of Sustainable Tourism: A Systematic Literature Review Integrating SOR and Experience Economy Perspective

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## Abstract

This study aims to identify the main determinants of Ecotourism Intention (EI) by emphasizing the mediating role of Destination Image (DI) and Tourist Satisfaction (TS) through the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) and Experience Economy Theory (EET) approaches. This review uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method following the PRISMA 2020 protocol, with article searches conducted on the Scopus and Google Scholar databases. The inclusion criteria covered publications from the period 2010–2025, written in English, published as peer-reviewed journal articles, and containing at least one variable from Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE), Sustainable Tourism (ST), Destination Quality (DQ), TS, or DI. From an initial 300 articles, 29 relevant articles were selected for thematic and descriptive analysis. The results show that Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE), Sustainable Tourism (ST), and Destination Quality (DQ) are the primary stimuli influencing Ecotourism Intention (EI) both directly and indirectly through Destination Image (DI) and Tourist Satisfaction (TS). Destination Image (DI) acts as a cognitive mediator that shapes positive destination perceptions, while Tourist Satisfaction (TS) serves as an affective mediator that strengthens tourists' behavioral intent. The chained mediating relationship of DI and TS was found to be consistent within the SOR and Experience Economy models. Variations in context were observed, where Destination Image (DI) is more dominant in event/festival destinations, while Tourist Satisfaction (TS) is more influential in service and infrastructure-based destinations. This research extends the theoretical understanding of Ecotourism Intention (EI) through the integration of (SOR) and (EET), and provides practical implications for destination managers in designing strategies to enhance tourist experiences, implement sustainability principles, and strengthen destination image.

*Keywords:* ecotourism intention, memorable tourism experience, sustainable tourism, destination quality, tourist satisfaction, destination image, SOR, experience economy.

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## 1. Introduction

Tourism is a strategic sector that contributes significantly to Indonesia's economy, both in terms of foreign exchange earnings, employment creation, and regional development. As global awareness of the environmental and social impacts of tourism activities increases, the orientation of tourism development has shifted toward a sustainable tourism approach. A concrete form of this approach is ecotourism, which emphasizes the principles of environmental responsibility, local cultural preservation, and active community involvement. In this context, Ecotourism Intention (EI), or the tourist's intention to choose an ecotourism destination, becomes a key indicator in measuring the effectiveness of sustainable tourism development strategies. Therefore, the study of Ecotourism Intention (EI) is becoming increasingly relevant, especially in the post-pandemic era, where tourist preferences tend to shift towards destinations that are more eco-friendly and offer deeper, more meaningful experiences.

Based on previous literature, there are five main variables that are hypothesized to play a role in shaping Ecotourism Intention (EI): (1) Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE), (2) Sustainable Tourism (ST), (3) Destination Quality (DQ), (4) Tourist Satisfaction (TS), and (5) Destination Image (DI). A memorable tourism experience (MTE) has been proven

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to increase tourists' revisit intention and pro-environmental behavior (Obradović et al., 2022; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). The aspect of sustainability (ST) reflects tourists' moral and ethical values towards the environment, which encourages positive intentions towards the destination (Hansen et al., 2024; Lu et al., 2022). Meanwhile, destination quality (DQ), which includes services, facilities, and attractions, contributes directly to the formation of satisfaction and image (Chua et al., 2021; Gao et al., 2024). Tourist satisfaction and destination image are two evaluative dimensions that serve as important psychological mediators in the process of forming revisit intention (Nafis, 2019; Nguyen, 2021).

Theoretically, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) remains the dominant framework in explaining tourist intentions. However, its limitation in capturing affective aspects has encouraged model enrichment through the integration of psychographic constructs such as self-congruity, place attachment, and emotional solidarity (Chen et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2020; Prayag et al., 2020; Prayag & Ryan, 2012). Alternative approaches such as the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework are also increasingly used to explain the relationship between destination stimuli, tourists' internal reactions (emotions, image, satisfaction), and their ultimate intentions (Asyraff et al., 2023; Hochreiter et al., 2023; Lusianingrum & Pertiwi, 2023; Nian et al., 2023).

Although the number of empirical studies on EI continues to grow, most still focus on East Asia and Europe. In Indonesia, research on EI, especially with an integrated theoretical approach and the context of ecotourism destinations in West Java, remains limited. Furthermore, few studies have simultaneously tested the dual mediating role of satisfaction and image in a multivariate model, or integrated the perspective of experiential consumption within the S-O-R framework. Based on this background, the research questions for this study are:

RQ1: What are the patterns and trends of previous research regarding the determinants of Ecotourism Intention (EI)?

RQ2: How do the stimulus variables (MTE, ST, and DQ) relate to Ecotourism Intention (EI)?

RQ3: To what extent does the mediating role of Tourist Satisfaction (TS) and Destination Image (DI) bridge the relationship between the stimuli and Ecotourism Intention (EI)?

RQ4: How can the conceptual framework of Ecotourism Intention be developed through the integration of SOR Theory and Experience Economy Theory?

## 2. Methods

This study adopts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to comprehensively identify, evaluate, and synthesize previous research concerning the determinants of ecotourism intention, with an emphasis on the mediating role of Tourist Satisfaction and Destination Image. The SLR process adheres to the PRISMA 2020 protocol (Page et al., 2021) to ensure transparency, replicability, and rigor in the selection and evaluation of relevant literature.

The systematic search was conducted on reputable journal article databases and high-impact publications:

- Scopus
- Google Scholar (as a supplementary source)

The Boolean search string used was based on keywords related to the research theme, as follows:

(“ecotourism intention” OR “sustainable tourism intention”) AND (“memorable tourism experience” OR “tourist experience”) AND (“destination quality”) AND (“tourist satisfaction”) AND (“destination image”) AND (“mediation” OR “mediating effect”) Search limitations were applied:

- Publication Year: 2010–2025
- Language: English
- Document Type: Indexed and peer-reviewed journal articles

The Table 1. summarizes the study selection criteria

**Table 1.** Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English language	Other than English language
Publication Type	Scientific Journal Article (peer-reviewed)	Conference proceedings, theses/dissertations, book chapters

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication Year	2010 – 2025	Prior to 2010
Study Focus	Ecotourism intention and mediating variables	Outside tourism or irrelevant topics
Methodology	Quantitative, Qualitative, or Mixed Methods	Studies lacking empirical data
Key Variables	Must include at least one of Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE), Sustainable Tourism (ST), Destination Quality (DQ), Tourist Satisfaction (TS), or Destination Image (DI)	Does not include the construct of tourism intention (Intention)

The selection procedure followed the four PRISMA stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion, with the following steps:

Records identified from the Scopus database = 300 Articles

Duplicates removed = 35 Articles

Records screened (by title/abstract) = 265 Articles

Records excluded during screening = 200 Articles

Full-text articles assessed for eligibility = 65 Articles

Articles excluded during eligibility assessment = 36 Articles

Articles included in the SLR = 29 Articles

For a clearer understanding, the article screening process is illustrated through the PRISMA flow diagram on Figure 1.

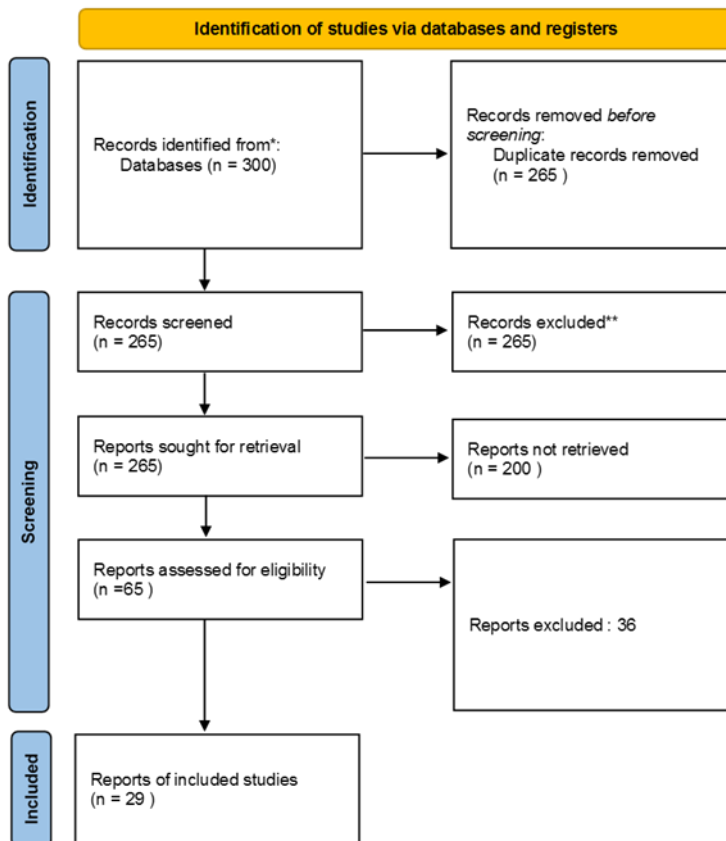


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

2.1. Data Extraction and Analysis

Data from the 29 selected articles were extracted using a standard template format, covering:

- Authors, year, and journal
- Theoretical framework utilized
- Location and context of the study
- Methodology type and sample size
- Main variables and their operational definitions
- Key findings (direct, indirect, and mediating effects)
- Model structure (mediation, moderation, or direct relationships)

The analysis was conducted thematically to group the findings based on major themes, alongside descriptive statistical analysis to observe publication trends.

3. Results

The selection process, following the PRISMA approach, resulted in the inclusion of 29 articles which are analyzed in this review, as shown on Table 2.

**Table 2.** Summary of Included Literature (N=29)

Author(s)	Year	Research Title	Context	Country	Research Type	Theory Used	Publisher/Journal
Al Hadi, M. Q., Wahab, A., & Budi, I. S.	2024	Green Practices and Purchase Intentions: The Mediating Role of Green Image and Trust Among Muslim Consumers A Mediating Role of Destination Image in the Relationship between Event Quality, Perceived Value, and Behavioral Intention	Halal Tourism	Indonesia	Quantitative, SEM	Theory of Self-Congruity	Jurnal Ekonomi dan Bisnis Islam
Moon, K. S., Ko, Y. J., Connaughton, D. P., & Lee, J. H.	2013	Do corporate sustainable management activities improve customer satisfaction, word of mouth intention and repurchase intention?	Sports Event	South Korea	Quantitative, SEM	Service Marketing Theory & SOR Theory	Journal of Sport & Tourism
Shin, Y., Thai, V. V., Grewal, D., & Kim, Y.	2017	Analysis of Event Quality Effect on Satisfaction and	Service Industry	South Korea	Quantitative, SEM	Relationship Marketing, and Triple Bottom Line	Sustainability
Ritonga, R. M.	2019		Ramayana Ballet	Indonesia	Quantitative, SEM	SERVQUAL	Jurnal Manajemen

Author(s)	Year	Research Title	Context	Country	Research Type	Theory Used	Publisher/Journal
Razak, D. H. A.	2022	Behavioural Intentions of the Ramayana Ballet Attendees The Mediating Role of Destination Image on Sports Tourism Event Attributes and Behavioural Intention The Effect of Festival Quality on Revisit Intention:	Sports Event	Malaysia	Quantitative, SEM	Destination Image Theory	Journal of Tourism Research
Supriono & Yulianto, E.	2021	Mediating Role of Destination Image in Jember Fashion Carnaval The Cognitive-Affective-Conative Model of Destination Image: A Confirmatory Analysis Testing an Integrated Destination Image Model Across Residents and Tourists	Jember Fashion Carnaval	Indonesia	Quantitative, SEM	Theory of Reasoned Action	Jurnal Pariwisata Terapan
Agapito, D., Valle, P. O., & Mendes, J.	2013	Model of Destination Image: A Confirmatory Analysis Testing an Integrated Destination Image Model Across Residents and Tourists	Beach Tourism	Portugal	Quantitative, CFA	Cognitive-Affective-Conative	Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing
Stylidis, D., Shani, A., & Belhassen, Y.	2017	Image Model Across Residents and Tourists Comparing face-to-face and electronic word-of-mouth in destination image formation: The case of Iran	Sustainable Tourism	Israel	Quantitative, SEM	Social Exchange Theory	Tourism Management
Jalilvand, R., & Heidari, N.	2017	The role of motivation in visitor satisfaction and loyalty at sustainable tourism destinations	Tourism Destination	Iran	Quantitative, SEM	WOM Theory	Information Technology & Tourism
Medina-Muñoz, P., Gutiérrez-Pérez, D., et al.	2016		Sustainable Ecotourism Destination	Spain	Quantitative, SEM	Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory	Journal of Sustainable Tourism

Author(s)	Year	Research Title	Context	Country	Research Type	Theory Used	Publisher/Journal
Ghaderi, Z., Jalilvand, R., et al.	2018	The role of loyalty intentions in sustainable tourism development: The case of eco-tourism	Ecotourism Destination	Iran	Quantitative, SEM	TBP theory	Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research
Chon, K., & Li, X.	2013	Understanding tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty: An integrated model	Ecotourism Destination	Hong Kong	Quantitative, SEM	Triple Bottom Line	Tourism Management
Saut, M., & Song, V.	2022	Influences of airport service quality, satisfaction, and image on behavioral intention towards destination visit	Airports in Southeast Asia	Cambodia	Quantitative, SEM	SERVQUAL and Expectancy–Disconfirmation Theory	Journal of Air Transport Management
Atmari, N. V., & Putri, V. W.	2021	The Effect of Tourism Experience on Revisit Intention through Destination Image and Satisfaction	Indonesian Tourism Destination	Indonesia	Quantitative, SEM	Experience Economy Theory	Jurnal Kepariwisataaan Indonesia
Rismawati, E. S., Sitepu, E., & Manurung, J. S.	2021	Service Quality, Destination Image, and Memorable Experience: Their Direct and Indirect Influence on Revisit Intention through Tourist Satisfaction in Medan City	Medan City	Indonesia	Quantitative, SEM	SERVQUAL and Experience Economy Theory	Jurnal Pariwisata
Thipsingh, S., et al.	2022	Social and sustainable determinants of the tourist satisfaction and temporal revisit intention: A case of	Yogyakarta Destination	Indonesia	Quantitative, SEM	Expectation–Confirmation Theory and SOR	Sustainability

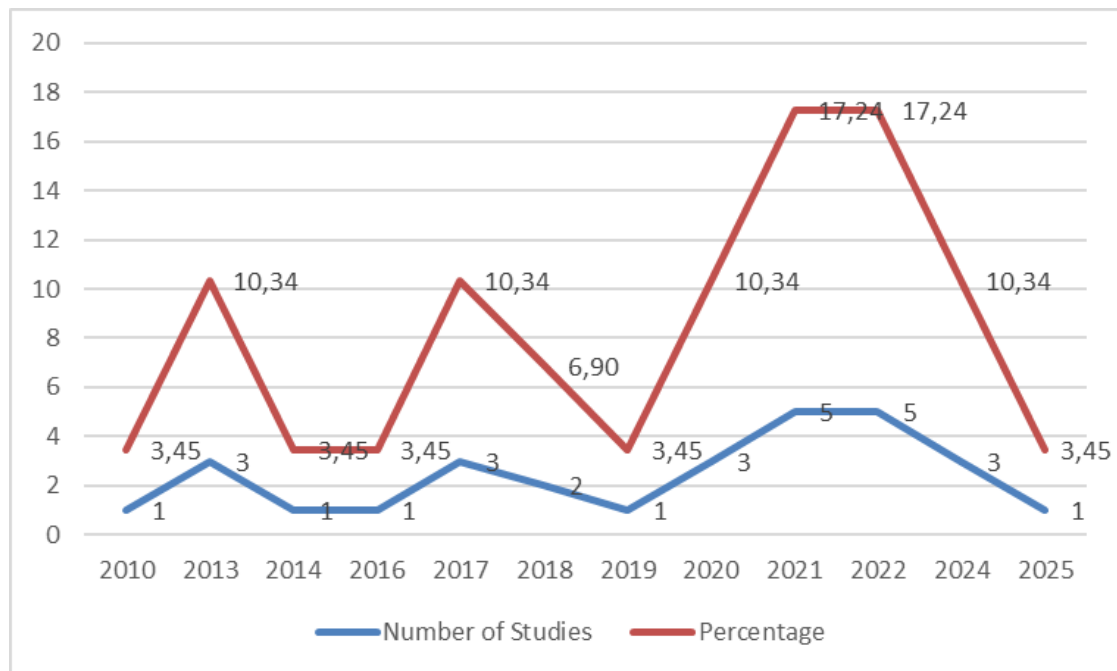
Author(s)	Year	Research Title	Context	Country	Research Type	Theory Used	Publisher/Journal
Lamichhane, S., et al.	2025	Yogyakarta, Indonesia Sustainable Homestay Practices and Behavioral Intention of Tourist to Revisit: A Mediated Study of Experience and Satisfaction with Services Provided in Nepal	Nepal Industry	Nepal	Quantitative, SEM	SOR Theory	Tourism Management Perspectives
Nik Mohamad Shamim, N. M. Z., et al.	2024	The Impact of Ecological Sustainability on Tourists' Satisfaction and Revisit Intention: A Case Study in Langkawi, Malaysia	Sustainable Destination in Langkawi	Malaysia	Quantitative, SEM	SOR Theory	Sustainability
Shih, I. T., et al.	2024	Exploring the impact of perceived sustainability on customer satisfaction and the mediating role of perceived value	Sustainable Products	Mongolia	Quantitative, SEM	SOR Theory	Sustainability
Kyriakaki, A., & Kleinaki, M.	2022	Planning a Sustainable Tourism Destination Focusing on Tourists' Expectations, Perceptions and Experiences	Ecotourism in Greece	Greece	Quantitative, Survey	Triple Bottom Line	Sustainability
Dileep Kumar, M., Govindarajo, N. S., & Ho, S. K.	2020	Effect of service quality on visitor satisfaction, destination image and destination loyalty – Avitourism	International Avitourism	Malaysia	Quantitative, SEM	Expectation Disconfirmation Theory	Journal of Environmental Management & Tourism
Lee, S. W., & Xue, K.	2020	A model of destination loyalty: integrating	Ecotourism in China	China	Quantitative, SEM	Triple Bottom Line	Tourism Management

Author(s)	Year	Research Title	Context	Country	Research Type	Theory Used	Publisher/Journal
Carvache-Franco, M., et al.	2022	destination image and sustainable tourism Satisfaction Factors That Predict Loyalty in Ecotourism: A Study of Foreign Tourism in Costa Rica A study of event quality, destination image, perceived value, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty among sport tourists	Ecotourism	Costa Rica	Quantitative, Survey	SOR and Cognitive–Affective–Conative Theory	Journal of Ecotourism, Taylor & Francis
Jeong, Y., & Kim, S.	2020	Experiences, post-trip destination image, satisfaction and loyalty: An ecotourism context	Sports Event	South Korea	Quantitative, SEM	SOR Theory	Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics
Li, T., Liu, F., & Soutar, G. N.	2021	The Relationship Between the Quality of Destination and Tourist Satisfaction: The Role of Destination Attributes	Ecotourism	China	Quantitative, SEM	SOR and Experiential Consumption Theory	Journal of Sustainable Tourism
Sumaryadi, S., Hurriyati, R., Wibowo, L.A., & Gaffar, V.	2021	The Influences of Push and Pull Factors on the International Leisure Tourists’ Return Intention to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam	Halal Tourism	Indonesia	Quantitative, SEM	SOR Theory and Destination Attributes Halal Tourism	Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business
Khuong, M. N., & Ha, H. T. T.	2014	Examining the Relationship Between Tourist Motivation and Satisfaction by	International Tourism	Vietnam	Quantitative, SEM	Push–Pull Theory	International Journal of Trade, Economics and Finance
Albayrak, T., & Caber, M.	2018		Adventure Tourism	Turkey	Quantitative, SEM & fsQCA	SOR and Destination Image Theory	Tourism Management

Author(s)	Year	Research Title	Context	Country	Research Type	Theory Used	Publisher/Journal
Wang, C.-Y., & Hsu, M. K.	2010	Two Competing Methods The Relationships of Destination Image, Satisfaction, and Behavioral Intentions: An Integrated Model.	Cultural Heritage Tourism	Taiwan	Quantitative, SEM	Cognitive–Affective–Conative and SOR Theory	Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing

### 3.1. Distribution of Publication Year

The distribution of the 29 selected articles based on their publication year is presented on Figure 2.



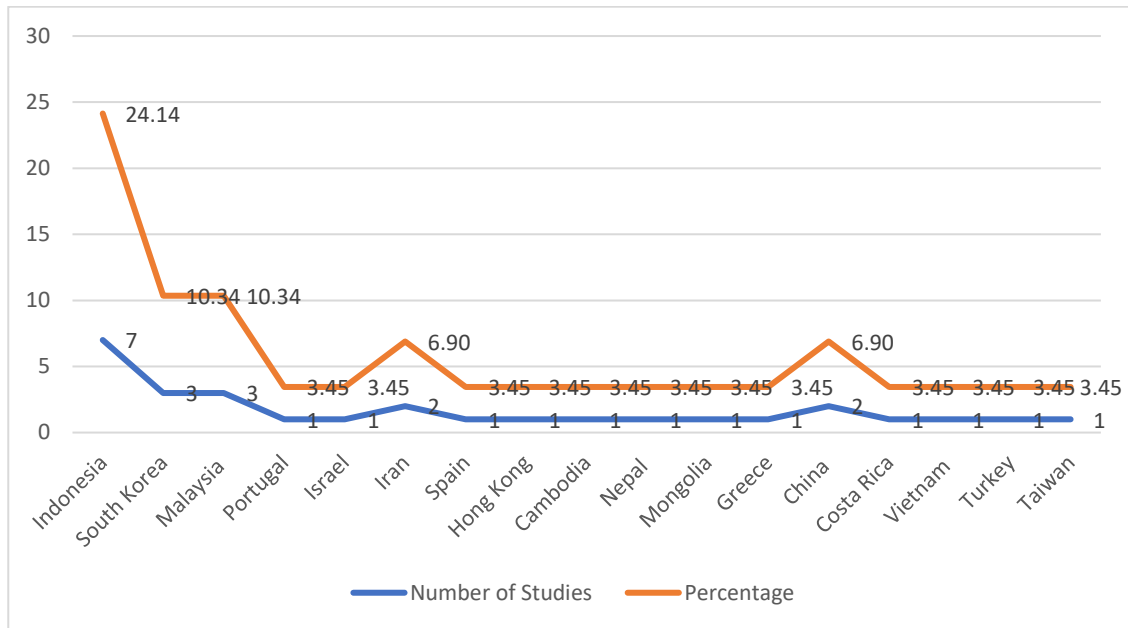
**Figure 2.** Distribution of Publication Year

Based on the graph in Figure 3.1 above, it is evident that the publication of articles during the period 2010–2025 shows a fluctuating pattern. The peak of research productivity occurred in the periods 2020 and 2022, contributing 10.34% and 17.24% respectively, which corresponds to 3 to 5 articles per year. This was followed by the years 2013 and 2017, each contributing 10.34% or 3 articles. Meanwhile, the years 2010, 2014, 2016, 2019, and 2025 were periods with the lowest productivity, each contributing only 3.45% or 1 article per year.

This trend indicates that research interest in the topics of destination image, tourist satisfaction, and revisit intention began to increase significantly since 2020, coinciding with the transition period pre- and post-COVID-19 pandemic. This surge suggests greater attention towards sustainable tourism, tourist behavior, and destination strategies for attracting revisit intentions amidst changing global conditions. However, it should be noted that the data for 2024 and 2025, at 3.45% (or 1 article) for each year, tends to be low, which is likely due to the incomplete reporting of publications within the study period. Overall, there is a visible stable focus and a clear increase in interest during the post-pandemic period (2020 – 2022).

### 3.2. Distribution of Study Region/Country

The geographical distribution of the studies analyzed is presented on Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** Distribution of Publication by Country Context

Among the 29 analyzed articles, the research locations are predominantly in Indonesia, accounting for 7 articles (24.14%). This demonstrates a high consistency of research within the country throughout the 2010–2025 period. South Korea and Malaysia rank next, each contributing 3 articles (10.34%). Other countries such as Portugal, Israel, Iran, Spain, Hong Kong, Cambodia, Nepal, Mongolia, Greece, China, Costa Rica, Vietnam, Turkey, and Taiwan each appear only once (3.45%), indicating a more sporadic contribution.

It can be stated that the evolution of study locations shows a dominant focus in the Asia region, specifically Southeast and East Asia, with additional contributions from Europe and Latin America in certain years. This illustrates that research on behavioral intention in tourism is developing globally but remains concentrated in regions with high growth in the tourism sector.

### 3.3. Theories Approaches

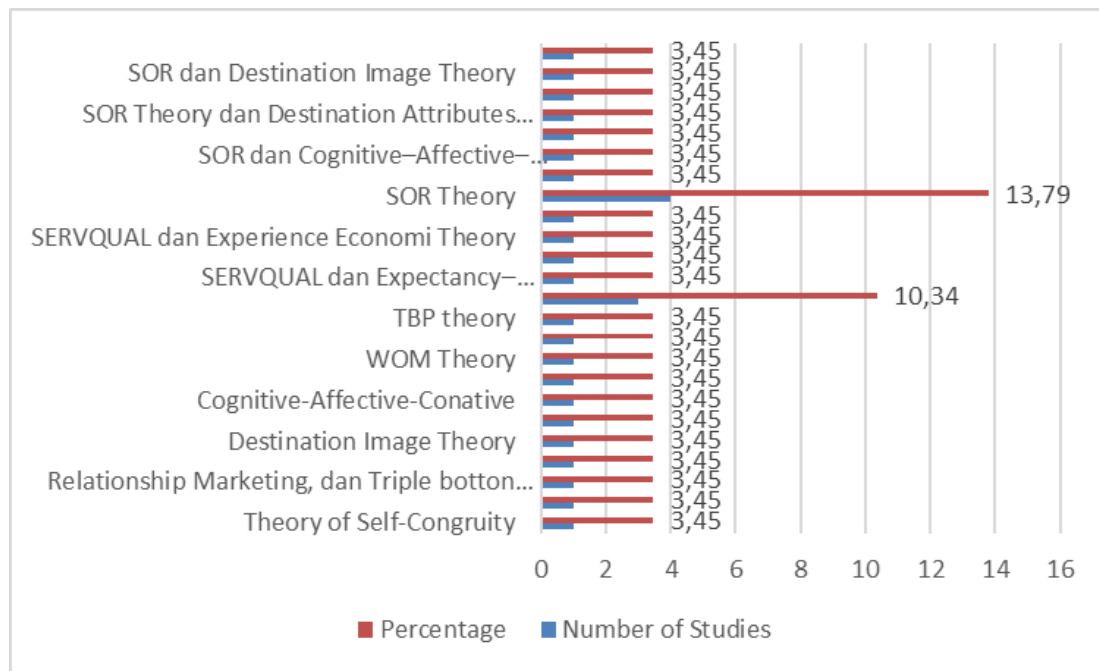
The distribution of the theoretical frameworks used in the literature review is shown on Figure 4.

Based on the mapping of the theories used in the literature, the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) Theory emerged as the most dominant conceptual framework, utilized by 13.79% of the studies. This dominance indicates that SOR is considered to have a comprehensive analytical capacity to explain the psychological process of tourists, ranging from external stimuli originating from destination attributes, the internalization process within the tourist (organism), to the manifestation of behavior or revisit intention (response). The strength of the SOR model lies in its ability to accommodate multidimensional variables be they cognitive, affective, or conative making it highly relevant for explaining the complex phenomenon of ecotourism.

The second most frequently used theories are the combination of SERVQUAL and Experience Economy Theory, both utilized with a proportion of 10.34%. The integration of these two theories highlights a research focus on the evaluation of destination service quality (SERVQUAL) linked to the creation of a memorable tourism experience (Experience Economy). This approach positions service quality not merely as a technical factor but also as an element that shapes the emotional, sensory, and educational value for tourists.

Furthermore, several studies used combinations of SOR with other theories, such as SOR and Destination Image Theory, SOR Theory and Destination Attributes, and SOR and Cognitive–Affective–Conative Model. The proportion of these combination uses ranges between 3–6%, indicating researchers' efforts to enrich the SOR model with specific

variables contextual to destination studies. This integration strengthens the model's explanatory power in depicting the flow of perception formation, emotion, and subsequent behavioral intention of tourists.



**Figure 4.** Distribution of Theoretical Approaches

Other theories such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Word-of-Mouth (WOM) Theory, Relationship Marketing, Triple Bottom Line, and Theory of Self-Congruity were used in smaller proportions (less than 5%). Although limited in proportion, these theories serve as complements that add unique perspectives, such as the influence of personal values on tourist behavior (Self-Congruity) or the role of advocacy and recommendations in shaping visit intention (WOM Theory).

In summary, this distribution pattern indicates that research in the field of ecotourism tends to adopt a multi-theory approach, with SOR as the main framework integrated with contextual theories. This strategy allows researchers to address the complexity of sustainable tourism phenomena more comprehensively, covering the psychological aspects of tourists, destination attributes, and the mechanism of creating memorable tourist experiences.

### 3.4. Research Methodology

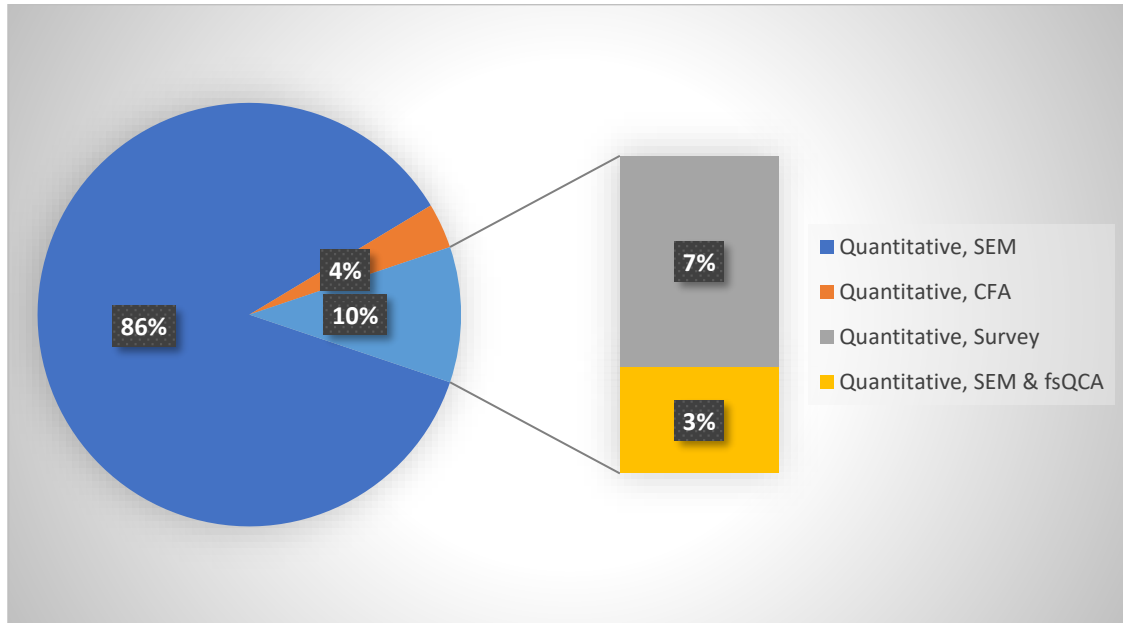
This pie chart illustrates the distribution of quantitative research methodologies utilized in the literature review. It is evident that the Quantitative method with the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach dominates significantly, employed by 86% of the total studies. This dominance reflects researchers' preference for SEM as an analytical tool capable of simultaneously testing complex causal relationships between latent variables and assessing construct validity. SEM's advantage in integrating both measurement model analysis and structural model analysis makes it the primary method for studies grounded in multi-dimensional theoretical models.

The Quantitative method, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) holds the second position, accounting for 7% of the proportion. Although its share is relatively small, CFA plays a crucial role in research focused on testing the validity and reliability of constructs, without involving the analysis of causal relationships between latent variables. Generally, studies employing CFA are in the exploratory stage of the measurement model before proceeding to SEM.

Furthermore, the Quantitative method, Survey is utilized by 4% of the studies. This method tends to be applied for studies that primarily focus on descriptive data collection or the testing of simple relationships between observed variables using conventional inferential statistical techniques (e.g., linear regression, ANOVA).

Lastly, the Quantitative method, SEM & fsQCA is used by 3% of the research. This combination is relatively rare but offers a rich approach by combining linear relationship analysis based on SEM with factor combination pattern analysis

based on fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA). This hybrid approach is employed to understand causal relationships while identifying the configuration of conditions sufficient to produce an outcome, thereby providing a more holistic perspective.



**Figure 5.** Distribution of Research Types Used

Thus, it can be concluded that this distribution pattern based on research type indicates that research in the field of ecotourism and sustainable tourism is heavily reliant on the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach as the main method. This aligns with the characteristics of the research variables, which are generally latent, multi-dimensional, and complexly interrelated, necessitating an analytical method capable of capturing these relationships simultaneously and robustly.

### 3.5. Types of Journal Publications

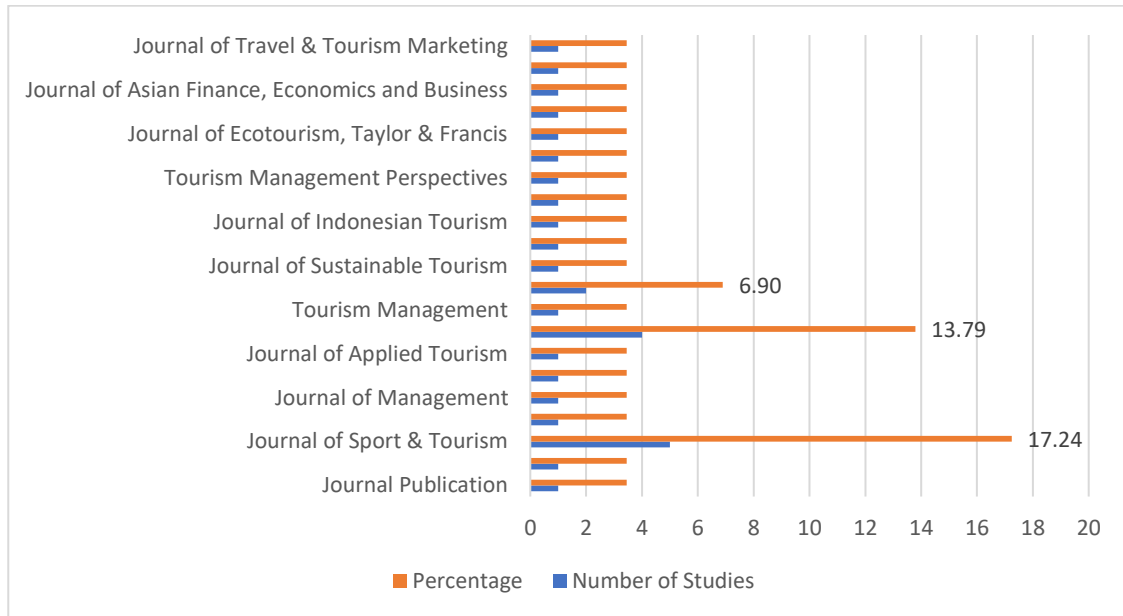
Based on the chart provided, the distribution of research publications across various scientific journals serving as references shows that the journal “Sustainability” holds the top rank, accounting for 17.24% of the total research. This dominant position indicates that Sustainability serves as the primary venue for research related to ecotourism and sustainable tourism, aligning with the journal's focus on interdisciplinary sustainability issues, including environmentally friendly tourism and destination management.

The second rank is occupied by the Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, with a percentage of 13.79%. The high volume of publications in this journal suggests that destination marketing, image, and tourist behavior issues are strategic topics in ecotourism studies, where the marketing aspect is considered crucial for enhancing destination appeal and strengthening its positioning in the global market.

Subsequently, the Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research is in the third position with a percentage of 6.90%, which indicates a study focus on the context of tourism in the Asia-Pacific region. The prominence of this journal reflects the regional relevance in examining ecotourism phenomena in developing countries that possess great potential but face sustainability challenges. Other journals such as Tourism Management Perspectives, Journal of Ecotourism (Taylor & Francis), and Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business each contribute in smaller proportions. Although the numbers are not as high as the top three journals, their contribution remains significant as they provide diverse perspectives ranging from destination management, tourism experience management, to economic and policy implications.

Furthermore, there are publications in the Jurnal Kepariwisata Indonesia and Jurnal Ekonomi dan Bisnis Islam, which demonstrates the contribution of national publications. This signifies that ecotourism research is not only developed at

the international level but also receives attention in local and national contexts, particularly concerning tourism development issues that align with cultural values and sustainability principles.



**Figure 6.** Journal Publication Distribution

Thus, this distribution pattern reveals a strong inclination for ecotourism research to be published in journals focusing on sustainability, tourism marketing, and the Asia-Pacific regional context. This trend is consistent with the evolution of sustainable tourism studies, where the synergy between environmental, economic, social, and marketing aspects is key to developing highly competitive destinations.

#### 4. Discussions

##### 4.1. Relationships Among Main Variables in the Ecotourism Intention Framework

A memorable tourism experience (MTE) strengthens the Destination Image (DI) and enhances Tourist Satisfaction (TS). These two mediator variables subsequently drive the intention for revisit or loyalty (Atmari & Putri, 2021; Jeong & Kim, 2019; Li et al., 2021). Ecological sustainability and sustainable homestay practices increase Tourist Satisfaction (TS), which in turn encourages revisit intention (Lamichhane et al., 2025; Shamim et al., 2024; Thipsingh et al., 2022). In another context, perceived sustainability influences perceived value, which then fully affects Tourist Satisfaction (TS) (Shih et al., 2024). Service quality and destination attributes enhance Tourist Satisfaction (TS) and Destination Image (DI), which subsequently influence intention. However, there are variations in findings across different contexts. For example, in airport studies, destination image was not significant, but Tourist Satisfaction (TS) remained a strong predictor of revisit intention (Deirmentzoglou et al., 2024; Jeong & Kim, 2019; M. et al., 2019; Razak, 2022; Saut & Song, 2022; Sumaryadi et al., 2021; Utomo et al., 2024; Yen et al., 2024). In the context of events and sports, event quality influences perceived value, which then shapes DI and behavioral intention (Moon et al., 2013; Razak, 2022). In halal tourism, green practices enhance green image and green trust, which in turn increase purchase intention; this relationship is strengthened by Islamic values (M Qoshid Al Hadi et al., 2024; Sumaryadi et al., 2021). The results of the literature synthesis indicate that Destination Image (DI) and Tourist Satisfaction (TS) play a significant mediating role in bridging the influence of stimulus factors on Ecotourism Intention and other tourism behavioral indicators. Destination Image serves as a primary mediator that links the influence of destination quality and tourism attributes to tourists' behavioral intention. Studies (Moon et al., 2013; Razak, 2022) prove that Destination Image is a crucial link between tourists' perception of event quality or destination attributes and their revisit intention. Similar results are confirmed by (C. Wang & Hsu, 2010), who assert that destination image is a cognitive factor that strengthens the relationship between destination experience and tourist behavior. Tourist Satisfaction acts as a mediator that bridges the influence of sustainability and destination quality on behavioral intention, word-of-mouth (WOM), and repurchase or destination loyalty behavior. (Shin et al., 2017) found that sustainable management practices enhance satisfaction,

which further encourages WOM and repurchase intention. This result is consistent with the findings of (M. et al., 2019), which showed that service quality affects revisit intention through satisfaction, and (Shamim et al., 2024), which proved that ecological sustainability drives revisit intention through satisfaction. Several studies confirm the presence of chain mediation  $DI \rightarrow TS$ , where Destination Image drives the affective evaluation of Tourist Satisfaction before finally influencing behavioral intention. This pattern aligns with the cognitive–affective–conative model, as evidenced by (Agapito & Sigala, 2024; Li et al., 2021). Contextual heterogeneity is found to influence the strength of mediation. In the air transport context, as reported by (Saut & Song, 2022), Destination Image does not always significantly influence visit intention, but Tourist Satisfaction remains a strong predictor. Conversely, in the context of sports and festivals, DI tends to be more dominant than TS, as demonstrated by (Moon et al., 2013) and (Supriono & Yulianto, 2021). This variation indicates that the relative roles of DI and TS can shift depending on the type of destination, characteristics of the tourism activity, and tourist expectations.

In conclusion, these findings affirm that effective destination management strategies must consider optimizing the dual roles of DI and TS, and adapting the approach according to the destination context. Strengthening the Destination Image may be prioritized for events or festivals, while enhancing Tourist Satisfaction needs to be the main focus for service- or infrastructure-oriented destinations.

#### 4.2. Development of the Conceptual Framework for Ecotourism Intention

Based on the systematic review of 29 articles, the conceptual framework for this study is constructed by integrating the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) Theory and the Experience Economy Theory (EET) as the main theoretical foundations.



**Figure 7.** Integrated Model of SOR and EET Theory

This model positions the variables Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE), Sustainable Tourism (ST), and Destination Quality (DQ) as exogenous variables (stimulus); Destination Image (DI) and Tourist Satisfaction (TS) as mediator variables (organism); and Ecotourism Intention (EI) as the endogenous variable (response). In the Stimulus (S) dimension, Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) has been proven to significantly influence the formation of DI and TS across various contexts, including cultural tourism, ecotourism, and tourism events. Studies (Atmari & Putri, 2021; Dewi et al., 2024; Jeong & Kim, 2019; Li et al., 2021) indicate that unique, emotional, and meaningful tourism experiences play a vital role in building positive tourist perceptions toward a destination and increasing their satisfaction. Furthermore, the Sustainable Tourism (ST) variable—measured through ecological, social, and economic sustainability attributes—is also proven to enhance TS and DI, thereby fostering tourists' revisit intention (Lamichhane et al., 2025; Shamim et al., 2024; Shih et al., 2024; Thipsingh et al., 2022). Subsequently, Destination Quality (DQ), encompassing physical quality, service quality, and specific destination attributes, is found to significantly influence DI and TS (M. et al., 2019; Saut & Song, 2022; Sitepu & Manurung, n.d.; Sumaryadi et al., 2021; Utomo et al., 2024). In the Organism (O) dimension, the variables DI and TS act as the psychological mechanism that mediates the influence of the stimulus on tourist response. DI influences TS through the cognitive-affective flow, which subsequently contributes to Ecotourism Intention (Agapito & Sigala, 2024; Moon et al., 2013; Razak, 2022; Y. Wang et al., 2020). On the other hand, TS acts as a full or partial mediator in the relationship between quality, sustainability, and behavioral intention, whether in the form of revisit intention, loyalty, or word-of-mouth (Asmelash & Kumar, 2019; Shin et al., 2017). In the Response (R) dimension, Ecotourism Intention (EI) encompasses revisit intention, destination loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth behavior. Cross-contextual studies consistently show that TS and DI are the main predictors of this intention, as evidenced in research (Carvache-Franco et al., 2020; Kyriakaki et al., 2021).

Therefore, the conceptual model proposed in this study not only explains the direct relationship between stimulus, organism, and response but also identifies the critical role of mediator variables in mediating these relationships. This framework is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of sustainable ecotourism studies, while also offering practical implications for destination managers in enhancing tourists' revisit intention.

## 5. Conclusions

This Systematic Literature Review identifies that Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE), Sustainable Tourism (ST), and Destination Quality (DQ) are the main determinants of Ecotourism Intention (EI), significantly mediated by Destination Image (DI) and Tourist Satisfaction (TS). The resulting conceptual model integrates the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) Theory and the Experience Economy Theory (EET), with MTE, ST, and DQ as the exogenous variables (stimulus), DI and TS as the mediator variables (organism), and EI as the endogenous variable (response).

The synthesis of 29 articles shows that:

- Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) enhances Destination Image (DI) and Tourist Satisfaction (TS) through meaningful cognitive and emotional experiences.
- Sustainable Tourism (ST) fosters satisfaction and destination image through ecological, social, and economic sustainability attributes.
- Destination Quality (DQ) influences satisfaction and image through physical quality and destination services.
- Destination Image (DI) and Tourist Satisfaction (TS) function as single or chain mediators, with the DI → TS pattern being consistent with the cognitive – affective – conative model.

Contextual heterogeneity exists : Destination Image is more dominant in events and sports, while TS is more decisive in service/infrastructure-based destinations.

The study findings affirm that the formation of EI is not only determined by the physical quality and sustainability of the destination but also by tourists' perceptions and affective evaluation of the experience they receive/gain.

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