

Experience marketing through authenticity and escapism: Drivers of revisit intention in Sumatra's natural heritage tourism

Indawati Lestari*, Wan Suryani

Magister of Management, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Medan Area,
Medan 20223, Indonesia

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*Corresponding author:

indahwatilestari@staff.uma.ac.id

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of destination attributes, escapism, and authenticity on place attachment and memorable tourism experience, and to examine the mediating role of place attachment on revisit intention. This study was conducted on tourists visiting leading destinations in Sumatra Province, such as the Toba Caldera Geopark and the Tropical Rainforest Heritage of Sumatra. Data were collected through a survey of 300 respondents chosen by purposive sampling and analyzed using a quantitative approach with partial least squares-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS 3.0. The results show that destination attributes, escapism, and authenticity have a positive and significant effect on place attachment and memorable tourism experience. In addition, place attachment is proven to mediate the relationship between these three variables and revisit intention. These findings confirm that tourists' emotional attachment to a destination plays a significant role in driving revisit intention. Theoretically, this study broadens the understanding of the relationship between tourist psychological factors and post-tourism behavior in the context of nature and cultural tourism in Indonesia. Practically, the results of this study provide implications for destination managers to strengthen the elements of authenticity, experience quality, and emotional value of destinations to build sustainable tourism.

Introduction

In recent decades, nature-based heritage tourism has become one of the most prominent forms of travel worldwide, as tourists become increasingly aware of environmental sustainability and seek more authentic experiences (Ye et al., 2025). This growing preference is not only driven by environmental awareness but also by tourists' desire for psychological restoration, emotional fulfillment, and meaningful engagement with destinations that contrast with increasingly urbanized and routine daily life. This trend marks a paradigm shift for tourists from a utilitarian orientation to an experiential orientation, where the primary value of a trip is not only measured by facilities and services, but by the emotional experience and personal meaning generated (González-Reverté et al., 2025; Sthapit et al., 2024a). In this context, tourist destinations are seen as being able to create value through memorable tourism experiences that involve dimensions of entertainment, education, aesthetics and escapism (Ponsignon et al., 2021; Mykletun et al., 2021).

Indonesia, with its ecological richness, has potential for developing experience-based tourism in natural heritage areas. The island of Sumatra, with destinations such as the Toba Caldera Geopark, the Tropical Rainforest Heritage of Sumatra (TRHS), and the Bukit Barisan Selatan ecotourism area, offers unique geology, biodiversity, and rich cultural value (Arivetullatif et al., 2023; Sutono et al., 2018; Zulvianti et al., 2022). The appeal of such destinations is rooted in prominent destination attributes, including beautiful landscapes, authentic environments, accessibility, and supporting facilities, which serve as initial cues for shaping tourist perceptions. However, memorable travel experiences are shaped not only by these functional aspects but also

by authenticity and escapism, allowing tourists to “escape” from routine and experience an emotional connection with the local nature and culture. Prior tourism studies in Indonesia have largely emphasized destination image, satisfaction, or service quality (Sutono et al., 2018; Zulvianti et al., 2022), while the experiential and psychological processes through which tourists form emotional bonds with natural heritage destinations remain less explored.

The concept of authenticity explains that tourists seek experiences that align with their values and meaning in life, not simply the authenticity of physical objects. In the context of natural destinations, this authenticity emerges through direct interaction with the natural environment, local wisdom, and the honesty of cultural narratives (Sthapit et al., 2024b). Meanwhile, escapism represents a key dimension of the Experience Economy, which emphasizes tourists’ active engagement in activities that allow them to forget the everyday world and immerse themselves in immersive travel experiences (Chen et al., 2023). These two dimensions are particularly salient in nature-based heritage tourism, where tourists actively seek immersion, reflection, and emotional renewal. Existing studies suggest that both authenticity and escapism play an important role in shaping memorable tourism experiences (Zhang et al., 2018; Sthapit et al., 2024b). Memorable tourism experience refers to the accumulation of sensations, emotions, and meanings that remain in tourists’ memory after the visit (Zhang et al., 2018). Such experiences not only enhance positive evaluations of a destination but also foster place attachment, defined as the emotional and cognitive bond between tourists and a place. Place attachment theory explains that this affective relationship can develop into loyal behavior, such as a desire to recommend or an intention to revisit (Zhou et al., 2022).

Within the discussion of tourist behavior, the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) provides a theoretical lens to explain how destination stimuli shape emotional and behavioral outcomes. In this context, destination attributes, authenticity, and escapism function as external stimuli that trigger internal psychological states (organisms), which are reflected in memorable tourism experiences and place attachment. These internal states then drive behavioral responses, namely revisit intention. Therefore, memorable tourism experiences and place attachment act as mediating mechanisms that bridge experiential stimuli and tourists’ loyalty behavior toward a destination. Although the S-O-R framework has been widely applied in tourism research, prior studies have tended to focus on hospitality, urban, or commercially oriented tourism contexts (Ponsignon et al., 2021; Mykletun et al., 2021), with relatively limited attention to natural heritage destinations where emotional immersion and environmental engagement play a more central role.

Although previous research has examined the relationship between tourism experience and revisit intention, many studies treat destination attributes, authenticity, and escapism as separate predictors, rather than examining how they interact to shape emotional attachment and revisit intention. Empirical evidence from natural heritage destinations in Indonesia remains limited, and it is still unclear whether findings from other tourism contexts can be directly applied to destinations characterized by ecological sensitivity and strong cultural embeddedness (Arivettullatif et al., 2023; Sthapit et al., 2024b). This limitation is important, as tourists visiting natural heritage destinations may evaluate experiences and form attachments differently from those visiting more conventional tourism settings. Therefore, this study builds on existing tourism research by examining the influence of destination attributes, escapism, and authenticity on revisit intention through memorable tourism experience and place attachment (Sthapit et al., 2024b; Ye et al., 2025). Theoretically, this research broadens our understanding of the formation of tourist loyalty through the lens of the S-O-R framework and place attachment theory. Practically, the results are expected to contribute to destination managers and tourism stakeholders in Sumatra in designing immersive, authentic, and sustainable tourism experience strategies to encourage repeat visits.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Stimulus-organism response framework and place attachment theory

The stimulus–organism–response (S-O-R) framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) explains how environmental stimuli influence internal psychological states, which then shape behavioral

responses. In tourism contexts, destination attributes, authenticity, and escapism function as external stimuli that activate tourists' internal evaluations and emotions (organism), such as memorable experiences and emotional connection to a place. These internal states then drive behavioral responses, including revisit intention. Applying S-O-R in this study allows a structured understanding of how the natural and cultural qualities of a destination evoke cognitive and affective responses that ultimately enhance loyalty behaviors. Thus, this framework supports the argument that tourists' revisit intention is rooted not only in destination qualities, but also in the feelings and memories those experiences generate.

Place attachment theory conceptualizes the emotional and psychological bond individuals develop with specific environments (Low & Altman, 1992). In tourism, place attachment reflects the depth of tourists' connection to a destination formed through meaningful experiences, cultural appreciation, and sense of belonging. This emotional bond often emerges from authentic interactions with local culture, natural landscapes, and immersive experiences that create personal relevance. Stronger attachment fosters loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and revisit intention as tourists feel connected and inclined to re-experience the destination. In this study, place attachment is positioned as a key mediating mechanism that transforms destination attributes, authenticity, and escapism into sustained behavioral commitment. In line with the S-O-R logic, this study conceptualizes destination attributes, authenticity, and escapism as experiential stimuli (S), memorable tourism experience and place attachment as internal psychological states (O), and revisit intention as the behavioral response (R). The conceptual relationships proposed in this study are illustrated in Figure X, which integrates the S-O-R framework with place attachment theory to explain tourists' post-visit behavior in natural heritage destinations.

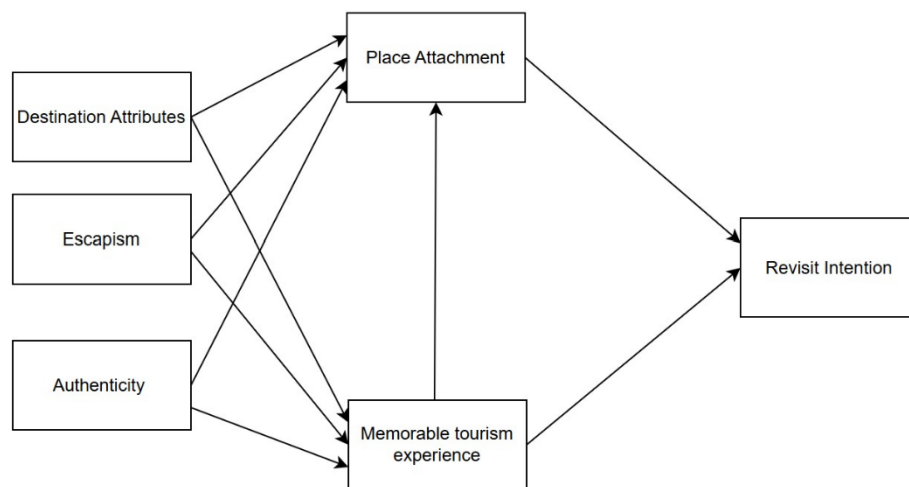


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Destination attributes, place attachment and memorable tourism experience

Destination attributes are a combination of various factors to attract tourists (Singh & Singh, 2019). Several studies have shown that destination attributes significantly influence visitors at different stages of their journey (Albayrak & Caber, 2013; Moon & Han, 2018). Understanding tourists' perceptions of destination attributes is an important factor for destination managers, because tourists' decisions in choosing a destination are often based on a comparison of the attributes possessed by each destination (Kim, 2014; Zhang et al., 2018). As mentioned by Schlesinger et al. (2020) that the characteristics or unique features of a tourist destination can attract tourists' interest and build emotional bonds. Singh and Singh (2019) states that when viewed from various destination attributes, tourists generally experience varying levels of satisfaction/dissatisfaction based on the attributes they perceive from various geographic areas. Thus, in analyzing destination attributes, Schlesinger et al. (2020) grouped into five main attribute categories: culture, natural beauty, hospitality, food and beverage, and facilities. These five attributes are influential in building place attachment because they can create experiences and emotional bonds with the destination. A

previous study conducted by Eusébio and Vieira (2013) states that destination attributes that attract tourists can evoke a sense of awe and comfort that strengthens their bond. Dedeoğlu (2019) states that adequate facilities, friendly local residents, and good accessibility contribute to positive tourist experiences. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Destination attributes have a positive influence on place attachment.

Perceptions regarding destination attributes are also related to tourism experiences that can leave a deep impression and be stored in memory (Kim, 2014). According to Buhalis (2000), Zhang et al. (2018), and Moon and Han (2018), destination attributes can create an authentic, engaging, and meaningful impression, potentially creating valuable memories that foster a positive response. Memorable tourism experience refers to a tourism experience that is positively remembered and recalled after the visit (González-Reverté et al., 2025). Therefore, there is a link between destination attributes and the perceived travel experience, which can leave an emotional impression (Huang & Bu, 2022; Mahdzar et al., 2015). When destination attributes are well-designed, the tourist experience not only lasts during the visit, but also leaves a lasting impression on the tourist. A previous study conducted by Huang and Bu, (2022) argue that the relationship between destination attributes and memorable tourism experiences can vary depending on the tourist's own perception. Thus, destination attributes can determine visitor satisfaction and future behavior.

H2: Destination attributes have a positive influence on memorable tourism experience.

Escapism, place attachment, and memorable tourism experience

Escapism as mentioned by Sthapit et al. (2024a) is a person's motivation to engage in a tourism experience to escape from their personal or interpersonal world. According to Ponsignon et al. (2021), tourism is considered a temporary departure or journey from everyday life to free individuals from their routines into a fresher reality. In the context of tourism, escapism refers to the urge to escape from their routines and work to seek new experiences and is a motivating factor for engaging in tourism (Rehman & Alnuzhah, 2022). Besides that, Mykletun et al. (2021) states that existing research supports the importance of escapism in describing and understanding tourism experiences (Sheng & Chen, 2012), and strengthens attachment to a destination. When tourists find a place that provides a sense of calm, freedom, or even an escape from everyday reality, the experience creates a profound emotional impact (Wang et al., 2023). According to Conti and Farsari (2024), this emotional bond can be considered not only as a regular tourist destination, but also as a place capable of fulfilling psychological needs and restoring oneself. Existing research has found the importance of escapism in providing meaningful experiences for tourists, where the need to escape from everyday routines can strengthen their emotional bond with the destination. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Escapism has a positive influence on place attachment.

When traveling, the feeling of escapism from the pressures and daily routine can affect the travel experience. As mentioned by Sthapit et al. (2024b), in the context of tourism, escapism refers to an individual's drive or motivation to escape from routine through travel. Escapism, as one dimension of tourism motivation, allows tourists to engage in experiences that offer novelty. According to Chen et al. (2023), escapism is considered a catalyst that strengthens MTE dimensions, such as novelty, involvement, and self-reflection. When tourists seek an escape from routine, they tend to be more open to unusual experiences, such as exploring new destinations, interacting with local cultures, or engaging in activities that challenge their personal boundaries. Beyond simply escaping, escapism can create a psychological state that supports a person's openness to new experiences. As stated by Sthapit et al. (2024b), escapism encourages tourists to leave their daily routines and immerse themselves in the atmosphere of a different destination. This allows them to have memorable experiences. When tourists are free from the pressures of life and can fully enjoy the atmosphere, they develop a deep emotional bond with the destination they visit. This becomes a crucial foundation for building a memorable tourism experience.

H4: Escapism has a positive influence on memorable tourism experience.

Authenticity, place attachment, and memorable tourism experience

The approach of the S-O-R theory states that human behavior can be influenced by three main components: stimulus (S), organism (O), and response (R) (Cheng et al., 2020). In the context of tourism, this approach is often used to understand how stimuli from the destination environment can influence psychological conditions and determine tourist behavior and responses (Jiang et al., 2017; Sthapit et al., 2024a). Authenticity in tourism refers to tourists' perceptions of the genuineness of an environment, cultural expressions, and experiences, which can shape both experiences and emotional attachments (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Jiang et al., 2017). The perceived authenticity, both the culture of social interaction and the local atmosphere provide a meaningful experience that strengthens their attachment to the destination (Sthapit et al., 2024b). Previous studies have shown a positive relationship between authenticity and emotional bonds (Ram et al., 2016; Shang et al., 2020; Yi et al., 2023). According to Ram et al. (2016), place attachment is a form of connectedness that arises between individuals and the environment. Cong et al. (2022) states that authenticity describes the extent to which tourists perceive a destination that leads to attachment.

H5: Authenticity has a positive influence on place attachment.

Authenticity also refers to the degree to which an object, place, or experience is perceived as genuine and reflective of cultural values and identity (Dai et al., 2021; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). Dai et al. (2021) states that authenticity can shape visitors' perceptions not only of tourist attractions, but also of themselves. According to Kolar and Zabkar (2010), authenticity is divided into two factors: intrapersonal authenticity and interpersonal authenticity. Intrapersonal authenticity refers to the alignment between a person's values, beliefs, and feelings and their actions or behavior. Interpersonal authenticity refers to genuine human interactions based on an individual's identity, for example, shared experiences with a group (Jiang et al., 2017). Zhou et al. (2022) suggested that authenticity contributes to forming connections between tourists and various aspects (places, objects, and spaces), thus influencing tourist satisfaction. Several studies have shown a positive relationship between authenticity in creating memorable experiences for people and satisfaction (Çakar & Seyitoğlu, 2023; Lee et al., 2024; Li & Wang, 2023; Zhou et al., 2022).

H6: Authenticity has a positive influence on memorable tourism experience.

Memorable tourism experience, place attachment and revisit intention

According to González-Reverté et al. (2025), memorable tourism experience refers to a tourism experience that is positively remembered and recalled after a visit. Emotions play a crucial role in shaping such experiences, as they influence how tourism encounters are encoded and retained in memory (Ye et al., 2025). Previous studies have shown that memorable tourism experiences play an important role in shaping tourists' emotional bonds with destinations. For example, Tung and Ritchie (2011) argue that emotionally rich and meaningful tourism experiences foster personal relevance and emotional connection with places. Similarly, Tsai (2016) and Trinanda et al. (2022) found that memorable experiences derived from tourism activities significantly contribute to the development of place attachment. More recently, González-Reverté et al. (2025) and Sthapit et al. (2024a) further confirmed that memorable tourism experiences strengthen tourists' emotional bonds with destinations through affective and experiential pathways. These findings indicate that memorable tourism experience functions as an important antecedent of place attachment, rather than merely as a post-visit evaluation.

H6: Memorable tourism experiences have a positive effect on place attachment.

Beyond fostering emotional attachment, memorable tourism experiences also influence tourists' future behavioral intentions. Prior research suggests that tourists who recall positive and meaningful experiences are more likely to revisit a destination and recommend it to others. For instance, Zhang et al. (2018) demonstrate that memorable tourism experiences significantly predict revisit intention through positive destination-related memories. Similarly, Mahdzar et al. (2015) and Huang and Bu (2022) report that memorable experiences derived from destination attributes

enhance tourists' willingness to revisit. Recent evidence by Ye et al. (2025) and González-Reverté et al. (2025) further supports the role of memorable tourism experience in strengthening tourists' intention to return by reinforcing positive emotional evaluations and confidence in repeat visits. Therefore, memorable tourism experience is expected to directly encourage revisit intention.

H8: Memorable tourism experiences have a positive effect on revisit intention.

Place attachment as mediating variable

In the context of tourism, place attachment represents a key psychological mechanism through which tourists translate their experiences into future behavioral intentions (Sthapit et al., 2024a). Place attachment reflects a positive emotional bond between individuals and destinations, developed through repeated interactions, meaningful experiences, and emotional resonance (Tsai, 2016; Trinanda et al., 2022). Previous studies indicate that tourists who feel emotionally attached to a destination are more likely to revisit and maintain long-term relationships with the place (Moon & Han, 2018; Singh & Singh, 2019).

Importantly, empirical evidence suggests that place attachment often acts as a mediating mechanism linking experiential evaluations to revisit intention. For example, Jiang et al. (2017) demonstrate that experiential perceptions influence behavioral intention through place attachment, while Li and Wang (2023) show that memorable tourism experience and place attachment jointly transmit the effects of experiential factors on tourists' behavioral intentions. Similarly, González-Reverté et al. (2025) report that place attachment plays a bridging role between memorable tourism experiences and revisit intention. These findings support the view that memorable tourism experience strengthens revisit intention not only directly, but also indirectly by fostering emotional attachment to the destination.

H9: Place attachment mediates the relationship between memorable tourism experience and revisit intention.

Research Methods

The present study employed a cross-sectional survey to examine how destination attributes, authenticity, and escapism (stimuli) shape memorable tourism experience and place attachment (organism) and, in turn, revisit intention (response) in natural-heritage tourism settings in Sumatra (e.g., Toba Caldera Geopark; Tropical Rainforest Heritage of Sumatra). A quantitative design was chosen because it allows systematic testing of relationships among latent constructs and is widely used in tourism behavior research. Using purposive sampling, the study targeted tourists who (i) were ≥ 18 years old, (ii) had visited one of the focal destinations within the last 12 months, and (iii) consented to participate.

Data collection was conducted in Medan (Sumatra) over a defined period using two complementary approaches. First, on-site intercept surveys were administered at transport hubs and visitor areas to approach tourists who had recently completed or were concluding their visits. Second, an online questionnaire link was distributed through local travel communities and social media groups related to tourism in Sumatra. Before completing the survey, all respondents were informed about the academic purpose of the study and assured of anonymity and confidentiality. To ensure data quality, incomplete responses and responses showing clear response-pattern bias (e.g., straight-lining) were excluded. A total of $N = 300$ valid responses were obtained and used for analysis.

Regarding sample size adequacy, the final sample of 300 respondents exceeds the minimum requirements commonly recommended for PLS-SEM analysis and is considered sufficient for models of moderate complexity with multiple latent constructs. Moreover, the sample size satisfies the "10-times rule" and is consistent with prior tourism studies using similar analytical approaches. The respondent profile indicates a diverse distribution in terms of gender, age, education, occupation, visit frequency, and visit purpose, suggesting that the sample reasonably represents a broad spectrum of tourists visiting natural heritage destinations in Sumatra.

Because the data were collected using self-report and perceptual measures, several procedural steps were taken to mitigate potential common method bias. First, respondents were assured that

there were no right or wrong answers and that their responses would remain anonymous, reducing evaluation apprehension. Second, the questionnaire items were carefully worded and translated using a back-translation procedure to minimize ambiguity and misunderstanding. Third, items measuring different constructs were arranged in a mixed order to reduce the likelihood of respondents inferring causal relationships among variables. These procedures follow common recommendations in survey-based behavioral research to reduce response bias.

Variable measurement

All constructs were measured with multi-item scales on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Items were adapted from prior tourism/experience studies to fit the nature-heritage context and translated to Bahasa Indonesia using back-translation. Destination attributes were measured by nine items modified from Schlesinger et al. (2020) and Buhalis (2000). An example of the item is “I find this destination to have good basic infrastructure.” Escapism is measured by four items adopted from Oh et al. (2007) and Sthapit et al. (2024b). Authenticity is measured by six items adopted from Jiang et al. (2017) and Sthapit et al. (2024a). An example item is “I felt a sense of connection to this place.” Memorable tourism experience is measured by six items adopted from Trinanda et al. (2022). An example of the item is “I will always remember my experience in this place.” Place attachment is measured by five items adopted from Trinanda et al. (2022) and Tsai (2016). Revisit intention was measured by three items adopted from González-Reverté et al. (2025). For the data analysis, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS SEM) using SmartPLS 3.0 is utilized due to the model complexity and distributional assumptions. The study tests for measurement model evaluation and structural model evaluation to analyze the hypothesis proposed.

Table 1. Variable Measurement

Constructs	Description	Item Codes
Destination Attributes	I find this destination to have good basic infrastructure.	DA. 1
	I believe the prices of tourism services at this destination are commensurate with the quality provided.	DA. 2
	I believe that cultural heritage resources, such as monuments and historical sites, at this destination are well-maintained and respected.	DA. 3
	I believe that cultural resources such as festivals, traditions, and local activities at this destination are well preserved and attract tourists.	DA. 4
	I believe that the cleanliness of the destination and the main attractions I visited are well maintained.	DA. 5
	I believe that the quality of tourism services at this destination is excellent.	DA. 6
	I believe that the level of protection of natural resources at this destination is adequate and well managed.	DA. 7
	I believe that the image or brand identity of this destination reflects values that attract tourists.	DA. 8
	I feel that the local people at this destination are friendly, open, and welcoming to tourists.	DA. 9
Escapism	I feel happier during my travel experiences.	E. 1
	I can imagine myself as someone else while enjoying my travel activities.	E. 2
	I feel completely free from my daily routine while traveling.	E. 3
	I feel as if I'm in a completely different world while enjoying my travel experiences.	E. 4
Authenticity	I enjoy destinations that provide insight into history and culture.	AT. 1
	This trip gave me a better understanding of the destination.	AT. 2
	During the trip, I could feel the connection between my experiences and the history and culture of the place.	AT. 3
	This trip enriched my knowledge.	AT. 4
	I enjoyed the calm and peaceful atmosphere of this destination.	AT. 5
	I felt a sense of connection to this place.	AT. 6

Memorable tourism experience	I found a meaningful experience in this place.	MTE. 1
	I will always remember my experience in this place.	MTE. 2
	I had a unique experience in this place.	MTE. 3
	I haven't found a similar experience anywhere else.	MTE. 4
	My feelings when visiting this place are different from other places.	MTE. 5
	I found a new experience in this place.	MTE. 6
Place Attachment	I have a connection to this place.	PA. 1
	This is the best place for me to visit.	PA. 2
	This place has a special meaning for me personally.	PA. 3
	This place is like no other.	PA. 4
	Emotionally, I can't get away from this place.	PA. 5
Revisit	I intend to revisit this destination in the future.	RI. 1
Intention	I would recommend this destination to others.	RI. 2
	I am willing to return for a similar experience.	RI. 3

Results and Discussion

Table 2 presents that of the 300 tourist respondents to Medan's natural and heritage destinations, the majority were female (56%) and aged 20–39 (66%), indicating a predominance of young tourists seeking authentic and meaningful experiences. Most had a bachelor's degree (46%) and worked as private employees or entrepreneurs (53%), reflecting a high level of literacy and economic capacity for experience-based tourism. The majority of respondents had visited before (46%) and traveled for recreational purposes (53%), indicating a positive experience that drove revisit intention. This pattern reinforces the role of memorable tourism experiences and place attachment as key factors in shaping tourist loyalty to heritage destinations in Medan.

Table 2. Respondent Profile (N = 300)

Respondent Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	132	44.0
	Female	168	56.0
Ages	< 20 years old	24	8.0
	20–29 years old	102	34.0
	30–39 years old	96	32.0
	40–49 years old	54	18.0
	≥ 50 years old	24	8.0
Last education	High school	78	26.0
	Diploma (D1–D3)	45	15.0
	Bachelor degree	138	46.0
	Postgraduate (S2/S3)	39	13.0
Job	Students	57	19.0
	Civil servants	48	16.0
	Private employees	90	30.0
	Entrepreneurs	69	23.0
	Others (freelancers, housewives, etc.)	36	12.0
Frequency of visits to destinations	First time	111	37.0
	Previous visit	138	46.0
	Frequent visit (> 3 times)	51	17.0
Purpose of visit	Recreation	159	53.0
	Education	63	21.0
	Spirituality or culture	48	16.0
	Other (photography, research, etc.)	30	10.0

Source: Processed data, 2025

Measurement model evaluation

Prior to evaluating the measurement model, the data were examined for sampling adequacy and factorability. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure exceeded the recommended minimum

value of 0.60, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($p < 0.001$), which indicates that the correlation matrix was suitable for factor-based analysis and that the data were appropriate for further multivariate modeling. Therefore, the analysis proceeded with the assessment of the measurement model using PLS-SEM.

The measurement model was evaluated in terms of indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, and convergent validity. All indicator loadings are above the recommended threshold of 0.70, which indicates satisfactory indicator reliability, while composite reliability (CR) values exceed 0.70 for all constructs, thus demonstrates adequate internal consistency. In addition, all average variance extracted (AVE) values are above the minimum criterion of 0.50. Therefore, it is confirmed that the variables have convergent validity. These results are summarized in Table 3, which shows that each construct explains a substantial proportion of the variance in its indicators.

Discriminant validity was first assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. The square roots of the AVE values (diagonal elements) are higher than the correlations between constructs, which means that each construct is empirically distinct from the others, as reported in Table 4. To further strengthen the assessment of discriminant validity, the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT) was also examined. All HTMT values are below the recommended threshold of 0.85, indicating adequate discriminant validity among the constructs.

Table 3. Validity and Reliability Testing

Variables	Indicators	Loading Factor	Composite Reliability	AVE
Authenticity	AT1	0.746	0.920	0.658
	AT2	0.848		
	AT3	0.798		
	AT4	0.834		
	AT5	0.802		
	AT6	0.836		
Destination Attribute	DA1	0.756	0.919	0.560
	DA2	0.722		
	DA3	0.764		
	DA4	0.794		
	DA5	0.828		
	DA6	0.719		
	DA7	0.715		
	DA8	0.709		
	DA9	0.717		
Escapism	ES1	0.866	0.864	0.615
	ES2	0.768		
	ES3	0.782		
	ES4	0.713		
Memorable Tourism Experience	MTE1	0.814	0.926	0.676
	MTE2	0.870		
	MTE3	0.866		
	MTE4	0.845		
	MTE5	0.748		
	MTE6	0.782		
Place Attachment	PA1	0.845	0.888	0.614
	PA2	0.819		
	PA3	0.788		
	PA4	0.746		
	PA5	0.713		
Revisit Intention	RI1	0.723	0.860	0.673
	RI2	0.893		
	RI3	0.836		

Source: Processed data, 2025

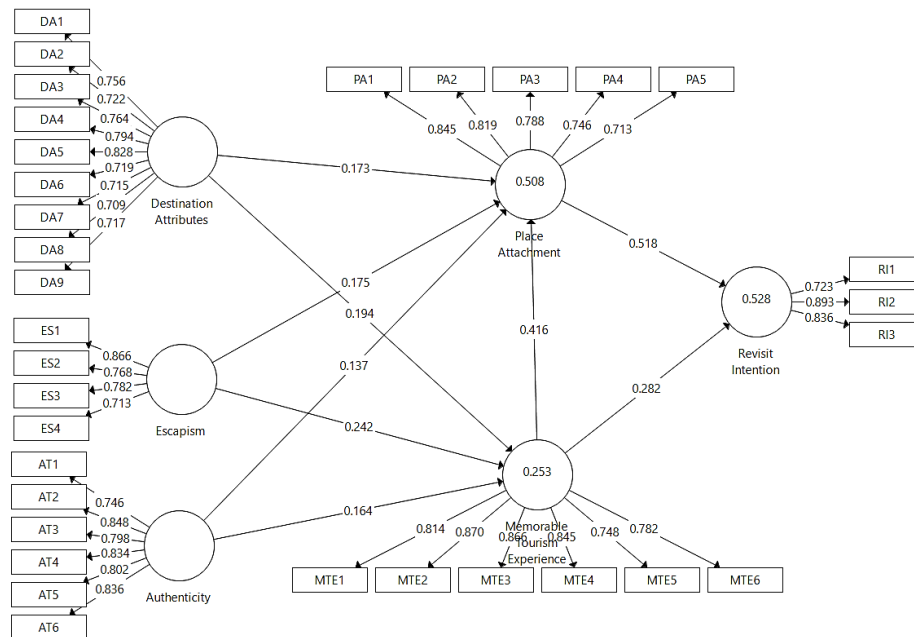


Figure 2. Outer Model

Table 4. Discriminant Validity

<i>Fornell-Larcker Criterion</i>							
	Authenticity	Destination Attribute	Escapism	Memorable Tourism Experience	Place Attachment	Revisit Intention	
Authenticity	0.811						
Destination Attribute	0.445	0.748					
Escapism	0.460	0.700	0.784				
Memorable Tourism Experience	0.361	0.436	0.453	0.822			
Place Attachment	0.445	0.538	0.548	0.620	0.784		
Revisit Intention	0.474	0.519	0.628	0.603	0.692	0.820	
<i>HTMT Ratios</i>							
	Authenticity	Destination Attribute	Escapism	Memorable Tourism Experience	Place Attachment	Revisit Intention	
Authenticity							
Destination Attribute	0.534						
Escapism	0.551	0.719					
Memorable Tourism Experience	0.437	0.489	0.512				
Place Attachment	0.542	0.607	0.593	0.687			
Revisit Intention	0.576	0.631	0.709	0.658	0.741		

Source: Processed data, 2025

Potential multicollinearity was assessed using the variance inflation factor (VIF) (Table 5). All VIF values are below the conservative threshold of 5.0, which indicates that multicollinearity is not a concern and that each predictor contributes uniquely to the model. In addition, to address potential common method bias associated with self-reported data, a single-factor test was examined and no single factor accounted for more than 50% of the total variance, suggesting that common method bias is unlikely to threaten the validity of the findings. Overall, these results confirm that the measurement model demonstrates satisfactory reliability and validity and is suitable for subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 5. Multicollinearity and Common Method Bias

	Authenticity	Destination Attribute	Escapism	Memorable Tourism Experience	Place Attachment	Revisit Intention
Authenticity				1.318	1.354	
Destination Attribute				2.037	2.087	
Escapism				2.072	2.151	
Memorable Tourism Experience					1.339	1.625
Place Attachment						1.625
Revisit Intention						

Source: Processed data, 2025

Structural model testing

After all parameters in the measurement model testing meet the validity and reliability criteria, the next stage is testing the structural model through the coefficient of determination (R^2) analysis to assess the ability of the independent variables to explain the dependent variable. The results show that memorable tourism experience ($R^2 = 0.253$) can be explained by 25.3% by the variables authenticity, destination attribute, and escapism, indicating a moderate and relevant influence on the formation of a memorable tourism experience. Furthermore, place attachment ($R^2 = 0.508$) is explained by 50.8% by memorable tourism experience and the previous factors, reflecting a strong level of emotional attachment that grows from positive tourist experiences. Finally, revisit intention ($R^2 = 0.528$) shows that 52.8% of the variance in revisit intention can be explained by place attachment and memorable tourism experience, indicating the model has high and substantial predictive power. These findings strengthen the theoretical framework that authentic and memorable tourism experiences play a vital role in forming place attachment, which in turn drives tourists' behavioral loyalty through revisit intentions.

Table 6. Determination Coefficient Test

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Memorable Tourism Experience	0.253	0.246
Place Attachment	0.508	0.501
Revisit Intention	0.528	0.525

Source: Processed data, 2025

Regarding predictive relevance, the Stone–Geisser Q^2 values for all endogenous constructs are positive (memorable tourism experience = 0.165; place attachment = 0.302; revisit intention = 0.347), indicating that the model has adequate predictive capability. Model fit was further assessed using the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). The SRMR value of 0.079 is below the commonly accepted threshold of 0.10, indicating an acceptable level of fit between the observed and model-implied covariance matrices.

Hypotheses were tested using bootstrapping procedures, and path coefficients were considered statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. The results of the hypothesis testing, including the standardized path coefficients (β), standard errors (SE), t-statistics, and p-values, are presented in Table 7.

After all pre-analyses met the criteria of validity, reliability, and feasibility of the model, the results of hypothesis testing showed that all relationships between variables in the revisit intention model were proven significant ($p < 0.05$). The variables destination attribute (DA), escapism (ES), and authenticity (AT) each had a positive effect on memorable tourism experience (MTE) ($\beta = 0.194$; 0.242; 0.164) and place attachment (PA) ($\beta = 0.173$; 0.175; 0.137), indicating that destination attribute (DA), escapism (ES), and authenticity (AT) were able to strengthen tourists' emotional attachment. Furthermore, MTE had a strong influence on PA ($\beta = 0.416$) and revisit intention (RI) ($\beta = 0.282$), confirming that memorable tourism experiences are an important factor in shaping tourists' behavioral loyalty. Meanwhile, PA exerts the most dominant influence on RI ($\beta = 0.518$), reinforcing the role of emotional attachment as a key driver of revisit intention. The mediating

effect of MTE $\rightarrow$ PA $\rightarrow$ RI is also significant ($\beta = 0.215$; $p < 0.001$), indicating that memorable tourism experiences enhance place attachment, ultimately fostering tourists' desire to revisit nature-based heritage destinations.

Table 7. Path Coefficient (Hypothesis Test)

Hypothesis	Original Sample	Standard Error (SE)	T Statistics	P Values
DA $\rightarrow$ PA (H1)	0.173	0.079	2.186	0.029
DA $\rightarrow$ MTE (H2)	0.194	0.076	2.544	0.011
ES $\rightarrow$ PA (H3)	0.175	0.081	2.156	0.032
ES $\rightarrow$ MTE (H4)	0.242	0.077	3.131	0.002
AT $\rightarrow$ PA (H5)	0.137	0.064	2.134	0.033
AT $\rightarrow$ MTE (H6)	0.164	0.078	2.117	0.035
MTE $\rightarrow$ PA (H7)	0.416	0.057	7.255	0.000
MTE $\rightarrow$ RI (H8)	0.282	0.053	5.368	0.000
MTE $\rightarrow$ PA $\rightarrow$ RI (H9)	0.215	0.035	6.210	0.000

Source: Processed data, 2025

Discussion

In the context of nature-based tourism, destination attributes play a crucial role in shaping emotional attachment to a place. The results of this study indicate that the hypothesis is accepted. A previous study by Moon and Han (2018) stated that destination attributes, encompassing aspects of the natural and social environments, as well as destination services and facilities, influence how tourists build relationships with the destination itself. Physical attributes of a destination, including natural beauty, authenticity, and the environment, serve as the primary foundation for forming place attachment. This connection to a place generally arises because tourists assess or perceive that the destination is capable of fulfilling their needs, whether for recreation, relaxation, or self-exploration. These findings are supported by Jiang et al. (2017), who assert that destination attributes not only influence visual or cognitive perceptions of a destination's image but also play a central role in shaping existential experiences. Thus, the relationship between destination attributes and place attachment is interconnected and has a significant and mutually reinforcing influence. Furthermore, the findings also indicate that a memorable tourism experience can be formed through various attributes present at a destination. The better the quality of the attributes provided, the stronger the impression tourists have.

Second, escapism has a positive influence on place attachment and memorable tourism experience. As stated by Sthapit et al. (2024) Escapism is a person's drive to escape from routine to achieve relaxation and inner refreshment. Research findings indicate that tourists view their travels as temporary journeys that allow them to experience freedom and serenity in those places. Furthermore, tourists escape from routine and experience each destination with joy, creating memorable experiences. These research findings are supported by Huang and Bu (2022), who state that a person's experiences can leave an impression on memories that shape their memory.

Third, authenticity was found to have a positive relationship with place attachment and memorable tourism experiences. In the context of nature-based tourism (NBT), authenticity is defined as the experience felt by tourists. Likewise, authenticity is also defined as the perspective of Lee et al. (2024) Authenticity is a crucial concept because it directly relates to how tourists interpret their experiences. Research shows that the tangible authenticity of a destination can create a sense of awe that can foster affective attachment, strengthening the emotional connection with the destination. Furthermore, tourists who perceive the authenticity of a destination, both objectively and constructively, tend to experience emotional pleasure, creating a memorable tourism experience.

Fourth, memorable tourism experiences also have a significant relationship with place attachment and revisit intention. The findings indicate that memorable experiences can be formed when tourists see and feel the beauty of the destination's environment. This result is supported by research by Ye et al. (2025) that place attachment arises when tourists experience memorable and enjoyable tourism experiences. These memorable tourism experiences create memorable moments,

such as moods that leave strong emotional traces in tourists' memories. The findings also show that when tourists experience things that leave an impression on the heart and mind, it can trigger a desire to return to the same place in the future. Finally, this study also found that memorable tourism experiences have an indirect influence on revisit intention through place attachment. The findings indicate that memorable tourism experiences can foster positive feelings towards the visited destination. Thus, memorable tourism experiences indirectly influence revisit intention through place attachment, where memorable tourism experiences foster emotional closeness and a sense of attachment to the destination, which ultimately encourages the desire to return.

Taken together, these findings can be clearly explained through the stimulus–organism–response (S-O-R) framework and place attachment theory. In this study, destination attributes, escapism, and authenticity function as external stimuli that shape tourists' internal psychological states, reflected in memorable tourism experiences and place attachment. These internal states then drive behavioral responses in the form of revisit intention. In line with place attachment theory, emotional bonds with a destination emerge from meaningful and memorable experiences, and these bonds serve as a key mechanism that transforms positive experiences into sustained behavioral intentions. Therefore, the results of this study not only support the empirical relationships among the variables but also reinforce the theoretical view that tourists' loyalty behavior is rooted in both experiential evaluations and emotional attachment to place.

Conclusion and Implications

This study examined how destination attributes, escapism, and authenticity influence memorable tourism experiences and place attachment, and how place attachment subsequently shapes revisit intention among tourists visiting natural heritage destinations in Sumatra, including the Toba Caldera Geopark and the Tropical Rainforest Heritage of Sumatra. Based on data from 300 respondents, the findings confirm that these experiential factors significantly strengthen both memorable tourism experiences and emotional attachment to destinations, which in turn encourage tourists' intention to revisit. Place attachment is shown to function not only as an outcome of positive destination experiences but also as a psychological mechanism that translates experiences into loyalty-related behavior.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the tourism literature by extending the stimulus–organism–response (S-O-R) framework in the context of nature-based heritage tourism. The results empirically support the view that destination attributes, escapism, and authenticity act as stimuli, memorable tourism experience and place attachment represent organism states, and revisit intention reflects the response. In addition, this study strengthens place attachment theory by demonstrating its mediating role in transforming memorable experiences into behavioral intentions, highlighting emotional bonding as a key mechanism linking experience to tourist loyalty.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that destination managers and local tourism stakeholders in Sumatra should prioritize the development of authentic and immersive experiences, improve the quality of environmental and supporting facilities, and design tourism products that facilitate emotional engagement. Local governments and destination management organizations can focus on preserving natural and cultural authenticity, while tourism operators can create experience-based activities that enhance tourists' sense of escape and memorability. Strengthening these aspects can help build long-term emotional attachment, which is essential for sustaining repeat visitation and destination competitiveness.

Limitations and future research directions

This study has several limitations. First, the data were collected using a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to capture changes in tourists' perceptions over time. Second, the study focused on selected destinations in Sumatra, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Future research is encouraged to employ longitudinal designs, examine different types of destinations, and incorporate additional variables such as tourist satisfaction, perceived value, or personal involvement to provide a more comprehensive understanding of revisit behavior in tourism.

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