

Developing Responsible Tourist Behavior through Smart Tourism Technology, Cultural Authenticity, and Memorable Tourism Experiences: Evidence from Bali

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ABSTRACT

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Background: The increasing demand for sustainable tourism has highlighted the importance of encouraging responsible tourist behavior while enhancing visitor experiences. This study investigates the effects of Smart Tourism Technology (STT) and Cultural Authenticity (CA) on Responsible Tourist Behavior (RTB), with Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) serving as a mediating variable. Grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) theory, the study proposes that smart tourism technology and cultural authenticity function as external stimuli that shape tourists' memorable experiences and subsequently influence their behavioral responses.

Method: A quantitative explanatory research design was employed, and data were collected from 372 domestic and international tourists who had visited Bali within the previous twelve months. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

Results: The findings reveal that Smart Tourism Technology and Cultural Authenticity significantly enhance Memorable Tourism Experience. Furthermore, Smart Tourism Technology, Cultural Authenticity, and Memorable Tourism Experience positively influence Responsible Tourist Behavior. The mediation analysis confirms that Memorable Tourism Experience significantly mediates the relationship between Smart Tourism Technology and Responsible Tourist Behavior, as well as between Cultural Authenticity and Responsible Tourist Behavior. These findings support the application of S-O-R theory in sustainable tourism research and demonstrate that integrating smart tourism technologies with authentic cultural experiences can foster responsible tourist behavior.

Conclusion: The study provides theoretical contributions to tourism behavior literature and practical implications for destination managers seeking to promote sustainable tourism development in Bali.

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INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is undergoing a significant transformation driven by rapid technological advancement, changing tourist preferences, and increasing demands for sustainability. The integration of digital technologies into tourism activities has reshaped how tourists search for information, plan their trips, experience destinations, and share travel experiences. At the same time, tourism destinations face growing pressure to achieve sustainable development by balancing economic growth, environmental conservation, and socio-cultural preservation. Consequently, tourism stakeholders are increasingly challenged not only to attract visitors but also to encourage responsible tourist behavior that contributes to destination sustainability. Recent studies indicate that digital transformation has become a strategic driver of competitiveness and sustainable tourism development in destinations worldwide (Sharifi et al., 2023; Hall, 2022; Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2021).

One of the most influential developments in contemporary tourism is the emergence of Smart Tourism Technology (STT). Smart tourism technology refers to the application of advanced information and communication technologies, including mobile applications, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, Internet of Things (IoT), virtual reality, location-based services, and digital payment systems, to enhance tourist experiences and destination management (Gretzel et al., 2015). Through these technologies, tourists can obtain real-time information, access personalized services, and interact more effectively with tourism stakeholders. The implementation of STT has significantly improved travel convenience, accessibility, and destination engagement, thereby creating more interactive and meaningful tourism experiences. Empirical evidence suggests that smart tourism technologies positively influence tourists' memorable experiences, satisfaction, and revisit intentions (Torabi et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2022; Pai et al., 2022; Yap et al., 2025).

The increasing adoption of smart tourism technologies has also transformed tourists from passive consumers into active participants in value co-creation processes. Through mobile applications and digital platforms, tourists can access information regarding attractions, accommodations, transportation, cultural events, environmental regulations, and local community activities. Such technological capabilities allow tourists to make informed decisions throughout their travel journeys. Furthermore, smart technologies can facilitate sustainable tourism practices by providing environmental information, promoting responsible travel guidelines, and encouraging environmentally friendly behavior. As a result, STT is increasingly viewed as an important instrument for enhancing tourism sustainability while improving visitor experiences (Yoo et al., 2017; Torabi et al., 2022; Sharifi et al., 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

This study adopts the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Theory proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). The theory explains that environmental stimuli influence an individual's internal psychological state, which subsequently shapes behavioral responses. In the tourism context, Smart Tourism Technology and Cultural Authenticity act as external stimuli, Memorable Tourism Experience represents the organism, and Responsible Tourist Behavior serves as the behavioral response (Wang et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2023).

Smart Tourism Technology and Memorable Tourism Experience

Smart Tourism Technology (STT) refers to the use of advanced digital technologies to enhance tourist experiences and destination management (Gretzel et al., 2015). Through mobile applications, digital payment systems, artificial intelligence, and real-time information services, tourists can access destination-related information more efficiently and interact with tourism stakeholders more effectively (Yoo et al., 2017). Recent studies indicate that STT significantly improves tourist engagement, satisfaction, and experiential quality. Torabi et al. (2022) found that smart tourism technologies positively influence memorable tourism experiences and revisit intentions. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2022) reported that technology-enabled services contribute to richer and more meaningful travel experiences. Therefore, smart tourism technologies are expected to facilitate the creation of memorable tourism experiences.

H1: Smart Tourism Technology positively influences Memorable Tourism Experience.

Cultural Authenticity and Memorable Tourism Experience

Cultural authenticity refers to tourists' perceptions regarding the originality and genuineness of cultural experiences encountered during travel (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). Authentic cultural encounters enable tourists to engage with local traditions, customs, and lifestyles, creating deeper emotional connections with destinations. Previous studies have demonstrated that authenticity significantly contributes to tourists' experiential value. Yi et al. (2018) found that authenticity enhances tourists' emotional attachment and destination experiences. Likewise, Han et al. (2022) reported that authenticity positively influences tourists' satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Consequently, authentic cultural experiences are expected to generate memorable tourism experiences.

H2: Cultural Authenticity positively influences Memorable Tourism Experience.

Smart Tourism Technology, Cultural Authenticity, and Responsible Tourist Behavior

Responsible Tourist Behavior (RTB) refers to tourists' actions that support environmental conservation, respect local culture, and contribute positively to local communities (Lee et al., 2013). In sustainable tourism, encouraging responsible behavior is essential to maintain destination quality and long-term competitiveness. Smart tourism technologies can facilitate responsible behavior by providing information regarding environmental protection, local regulations, and sustainable tourism practices (Sharifi et al., 2023). In addition, authentic cultural experiences may increase tourists' appreciation of local traditions and encourage respectful behavior toward host communities (Ramkissoon et al., 2013). Previous studies have shown that destination-related stimuli can significantly influence environmentally responsible behavior (Liu et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2024).

H3: Smart Tourism Technology positively influences Responsible Tourist Behavior.

H4: Cultural Authenticity positively influences Responsible Tourist Behavior.

Memorable Tourism Experience and Responsible Tourist Behavior

Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) refers to experiences that are positively remembered after the travel experience has ended (Kim et al., 2012). Such experiences are often associated with novelty, meaningfulness, involvement, and emotional engagement. Research suggests that memorable experiences influence tourists' post-visit attitudes and behaviors. Rasoolimanesh et al. (2021) found that memorable tourism experiences significantly affect behavioral intentions among heritage tourists. Similarly, Sharma and Nayak (2019) reported that high-quality experiences contribute to stronger emotional connections and positive behavioral outcomes. Therefore, tourists who experience meaningful and memorable travel experiences are more likely to engage in responsible behavior toward destinations.

H5: Memorable Tourism Experience positively influences Responsible Tourist Behavior.

The Mediating Role of Memorable Tourism Experience

According to S-O-R Theory, destination attributes influence behavioral responses through tourists' internal psychological processes (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In this study, Smart Tourism Technology and Cultural Authenticity serve as external stimuli that shape tourists' memorable experiences, which subsequently influence responsible behavior. Previous studies indicate that memorable tourism experiences play an important mediating role between destination attributes and behavioral outcomes (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Torabi et al., 2022). Therefore, MTE is expected to mediate the relationships between Smart Tourism Technology, Cultural Authenticity, and Responsible Tourist Behavior.

H6: Memorable Tourism Experience mediates the relationship between Smart Tourism Technology and Responsible Tourist Behavior.

H7: Memorable Tourism Experience mediates the relationship between Cultural Authenticity and Responsible Tourist Behavior.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to examine the relationships among Smart Tourism Technology (STT), Cultural Authenticity (CA), Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE), and Responsible Tourist Behavior (RTB) in the context of tourism destinations in Bali, Indonesia. The research framework was developed based on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Theory, which explains how external stimuli influence tourists' internal evaluations and subsequently shape behavioral responses (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). The target population consisted of domestic and international tourists who had visited Bali within the previous 12 months. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that participants possessed relevant tourism experiences. To be eligible for participation, respondents had to be at least 18 years old, have visited cultural attractions in Bali, and have utilized smart tourism technologies during their travel experience, such as mobile travel applications, online booking platforms, digital payment systems, or destination information services.

Data were collected through a structured online questionnaire distributed via social media platforms and travel communities. A total of 372 valid responses were obtained and included in the final analysis. The sample size exceeded the minimum requirement recommended for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), thereby ensuring sufficient statistical power for hypothesis testing (Hair et al., 2022). All constructs were measured using previously validated scales adapted from the tourism literature. Smart Tourism Technology was measured using five indicators reflecting accessibility, ease of use, real-time information, interactivity, and security (Gretzel et al., 2015; Torabi et al., 2022). Cultural Authenticity was assessed through five indicators capturing originality, preservation of traditions, authentic interactions, community involvement, and cultural uniqueness (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Yi et al., 2018). Memorable Tourism Experience was measured using seven dimensions, namely hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement, and knowledge (Kim et al., 2012). Responsible Tourist Behavior was evaluated using five indicators related to environmental protection, respect for local culture, compliance with local regulations, support for local communities, and sustainable consumption practices (Lee et al., 2013; Liu et al., 2022). All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0 software. PLS-SEM was selected because it is suitable for predictive research models involving multiple latent constructs and mediation effects. The analysis followed a two-step approach comprising measurement model assessment and structural model evaluation (Hair et al., 2022). The measurement model was assessed through indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Subsequently, the structural model was evaluated using the coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), effect size (f^2), and bootstrapping procedures with 5,000 resamples to test the significance of direct and indirect effects. Mediation effects were examined to determine the role of Memorable Tourism Experience in linking Smart Tourism Technology and Cultural Authenticity with Responsible Tourist Behavior.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile

A total of 372 valid questionnaires were collected and analyzed. Based on demographic characteristics, 54.8% of respondents were female and 45.2% were male. The majority of respondents were aged between 21 and 40 years (68.5%), indicating that the sample was dominated by productive-age tourists. Regarding nationality, 58.3% were domestic tourists, while 41.7% were international tourists. Most respondents had visited Bali more than once, suggesting adequate familiarity with the destination and its tourism services.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Male	168	45.2
Female	204	54.8
Domestic Tourist	217	58.3
International Tourist	155	41.7

18–20 Years	48	12.9
21–30 Years	146	39.2
31–40 Years	109	29.3
>40 Years	69	18.6

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was evaluated using factor loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), Cronbach's Alpha (CA), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The results indicate that all indicator loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming indicator reliability. Furthermore, Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values were above 0.70, while AVE values exceeded 0.50, demonstrating satisfactory convergent validity (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 2. Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	CA	CR	AVE
Smart Tourism Technology	0.901	0.925	0.711
Cultural Authenticity	0.889	0.918	0.692
Memorable Tourism Experience	0.927	0.94	0.689
Responsible Tourist Behavior	0.903	0.928	0.72

All constructs met the recommended criteria, indicating adequate reliability and convergent validity. Discriminant validity was assessed using the HTMT criterion. All HTMT values were below 0.90, confirming that each construct was empirically distinct from the others.

Structural Model Assessment

Before testing the hypotheses, collinearity was examined using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). All VIF values were below 5.0, indicating no multicollinearity issues. The coefficient of determination (R^2) showed that Smart Tourism Technology and Cultural Authenticity explained 62.8% of the variance in Memorable Tourism Experience. Meanwhile, Smart Tourism Technology, Cultural Authenticity, and Memorable Tourism Experience jointly explained 68.4% of the variance in Responsible Tourist Behavior.

Table 3. Coefficient of Determination

Endogenous Variable	R^2
Memorable Tourism Experience	0.628
Responsible Tourist Behavior	0.684

According to Hair et al. (2022), these values indicate moderate to substantial explanatory power.

Hypothesis Testing

The significance of the structural relationships was assessed using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples.

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	STT $\rightarrow$ MTE	0.412	8.271	0.000	Supported
H2	CA $\rightarrow$ MTE	0.458	9.105	0.000	Supported
H3	STT $\rightarrow$ RTB	0.183	3.221	0.001	Supported
H4	CA $\rightarrow$ RTB	0.254	4.638	0.000	Supported
H5	MTE $\rightarrow$ RTB	0.421	7.896	0.000	Supported

The findings indicate that Smart Tourism Technology and Cultural Authenticity significantly influence Memorable Tourism Experience. In addition, all three constructs significantly affect Responsible Tourist Behavior.

Mediation Analysis

The mediation analysis revealed that Memorable Tourism Experience significantly mediated the relationship between Smart Tourism Technology and Responsible Tourist Behavior ($\beta = 0.173$; $p < 0.001$). Similarly, Memorable Tourism Experience significantly mediated the relationship between Cultural Authenticity and Responsible Tourist Behavior ($\beta = 0.193$; $p < 0.001$).

Table 5. Indirect Effects

Hypothesis	Indirect Path	β	p-value	Result
H6	STT $\rightarrow$ MTE $\rightarrow$ RTB	0.173	0.0000	Supported
H7	CA $\rightarrow$ MTE $\rightarrow$ RTB	0.193	0.0000	Supported

These results suggest that memorable tourism experiences play a critical role in transforming destination attributes into responsible behavioral outcomes.

Discussion

The findings indicate that Smart Tourism Technology significantly influences Memorable Tourism Experience, supporting H1. This result suggests that the availability of digital tourism services, including online reservation systems, digital payment platforms, navigation applications, and real-time destination information, enhances tourists' overall travel experiences. These technologies reduce uncertainty, improve convenience, and facilitate personalized travel planning, thereby creating more memorable experiences. This finding is consistent with previous studies by Gretzel et al. (2015), Torabi et al. (2022), and Zhang et al. (2022), which emphasized that smart tourism technologies improve tourists' engagement, satisfaction, and experiential value. From the perspective of the S-O-R Theory, Smart Tourism Technology acts as a stimulus that positively shapes tourists' internal evaluations, resulting in memorable experiences.

The results further reveal that Cultural Authenticity has a significant positive effect on Memorable Tourism Experience, supporting H2. Moreover, Cultural Authenticity exhibits a stronger effect than Smart Tourism Technology, indicating that authentic cultural encounters remain a critical determinant of memorable tourism experiences in Bali. Tourists who experience genuine local traditions, cultural performances, community interactions, and heritage attractions tend to develop stronger emotional and cognitive connections with the destination. This finding aligns with Kolar and Zabkar (2010), Yi et al. (2018), and Han et al. (2022), who found that authenticity enhances experiential quality, emotional attachment, and destination satisfaction. The result confirms that Bali's unique cultural identity remains an important source of competitive advantage in tourism.

The study also confirms that Smart Tourism Technology significantly influences Responsible Tourist Behavior, supporting H3. The availability of digital information and smart tourism services enables tourists to better understand destination regulations, environmental conservation practices, and sustainable tourism guidelines. Consequently, tourists become more aware of their responsibilities toward the destination and local communities. This finding supports the arguments of Sharifi et al. (2023) and Wang et al. (2024), who suggested that smart tourism technologies can facilitate sustainable decision-making and encourage environmentally responsible behavior among tourists.

Similarly, Cultural Authenticity significantly affects Responsible Tourist Behavior, supporting H4. Tourists who perceive local culture as authentic are more likely to respect cultural norms, preserve heritage values, and support local communities. Authentic cultural experiences foster a sense of appreciation and emotional attachment, which subsequently encourages responsible actions. This finding is consistent with Ramkissoon et al. (2013), Su et al. (2018), and Liu et al. (2022), who reported that stronger connections with local culture contribute to pro-environmental and socially responsible behaviors.

The results further demonstrate that Memorable Tourism Experience significantly influences Responsible Tourist Behavior, supporting H5. Tourists who experience meaningful, enjoyable, and memorable travel experiences are more likely to exhibit behaviors that contribute positively to destination sustainability. Memorable experiences strengthen emotional bonds between tourists and destinations, leading to greater awareness of environmental protection and cultural preservation. This finding corroborates the studies of Kim et al. (2012), Sharma and Nayak (2019), and Rasoolimanesh et al. (2021), which found that memorable tourism experiences play an important role in shaping positive post-visit attitudes and behavioral intentions.

The mediation analysis confirms that Memorable Tourism Experience significantly mediates the relationship between Smart Tourism Technology and Responsible Tourist Behavior, supporting H6. This finding suggests that technology alone may not directly encourage responsible behavior unless it first creates meaningful and memorable experiences. In line with the S-O-R framework, Smart Tourism Technology serves as a stimulus that enhances tourists' experiences, which subsequently leads to responsible behavioral responses. This result supports the findings of Torabi et al. (2022) and Rasoolimanesh et al. (2021), who emphasized the mediating role of tourist experiences in explaining behavioral outcomes.

Finally, Memorable Tourism Experience significantly mediates the relationship between Cultural Authenticity and Responsible Tourist Behavior, supporting H7. This indicates that authentic cultural encounters encourage responsible behavior primarily through the creation of memorable and meaningful tourism experiences. When tourists feel emotionally connected to local culture, they are more likely to develop a sense of responsibility toward preserving the destination and respecting local communities. This finding is consistent with the studies of Yi et al. (2018), Han et al. (2022), and Rasoolimanesh et al. (2021), which highlighted the role of experiential mechanisms in transforming destination attributes into sustainable behavioral outcomes.

Overall, the findings provide empirical support for the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Theory. Smart Tourism Technology and Cultural Authenticity function as destination stimuli, Memorable Tourism Experience represents the organism, and Responsible Tourist Behavior constitutes the behavioral response. The results demonstrate that the combination of technological innovation and authentic cultural experiences is essential for fostering sustainable tourism behavior among visitors to Bali.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the effects of Smart Tourism Technology and Cultural Authenticity on Responsible Tourist Behavior, with Memorable Tourism Experience serving as a mediating variable. The findings reveal that both Smart Tourism Technology and Cultural Authenticity significantly enhance Memorable Tourism Experience. The results indicate that tourists are more likely to create memorable experiences when they perceive tourism services as technologically advanced while simultaneously experiencing authentic local culture. The study further demonstrates that Smart Tourism Technology, Cultural Authenticity, and Memorable Tourism Experience significantly influence Responsible Tourist Behavior. Among these relationships, Memorable Tourism Experience plays a crucial role in encouraging tourists to engage in environmentally and socially responsible actions during their visits. In addition, the mediation analysis confirms that Memorable Tourism Experience partially mediates the relationships between Smart Tourism Technology and Responsible Tourist Behavior, as well as between Cultural Authenticity and Responsible Tourist Behavior. These findings support the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Theory, suggesting that external destination attributes (stimuli) influence tourists' internal evaluations (organism), which subsequently shape behavioral outcomes (response). In the context of Bali, the integration of smart tourism technologies and authentic cultural experiences can effectively foster sustainable and responsible tourist behavior.

This study contributes to tourism literature by extending the application of the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Theory in the context of sustainable tourism. The findings confirm that Memorable Tourism Experience functions as an important psychological mechanism linking destination attributes to responsible behavioral outcomes. Furthermore, the study enriches the growing body of knowledge on smart tourism and cultural tourism by demonstrating the complementary roles of technology and cultural authenticity in shaping sustainable tourist behavior.

The findings provide important insights for destination managers, tourism businesses, and policymakers in Bali. First, tourism stakeholders should continue investing in smart tourism technologies such as mobile applications, digital payment systems, QR-based destination information, and real-time tourism services to improve tourist experiences. Second, preserving cultural authenticity should remain a strategic priority through the protection of local traditions, cultural heritage, and community-based tourism initiatives. Third, destination managers should design tourism experiences that combine technological convenience with authentic cultural engagement, as such experiences are more likely to encourage responsible tourist behavior and support long-term destination sustainability.

This study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted exclusively in Bali, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other tourism destinations. Second, the study employed a cross-sectional design, preventing the observation of changes in tourist behavior over time. Third, the data relied on self-reported perceptions, which may be subject to response bias. Future research is encouraged to examine the proposed model in different cultural and geographical contexts to improve external validity. Longitudinal studies may also provide a deeper understanding of how memorable tourism experiences influence responsible behavior over time. Additionally, future studies could incorporate other relevant variables, such as destination image, environmental awareness, tourist engagement, place attachment, or perceived sustainability, to further explain responsible tourist behavior in tourism destinations.

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