CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This opening chapter sets the stage for an in-depth exploration of sustainable tourism's impact on destination loyalty, with a specific focus on Borobudur and Prambanan temples. The chapter begins by introducing the critical role of sustainable tourism in the modern global context and its potential to influence tourist behavior. It proceeds to define the research problem and identify gaps in existing literature, establishing a need for this study. Objectives and research questions are clearly outlined to guide the investigation. This chapter aims to provide a solid foundation for understanding the complex interplay between tourist motivations, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), affordability perceptions, and their collective impact on destination loyalty within sustainable tourism frameworks.

1.1   Research Background

Tourism has become crucial for country economies because of its sociocultural, environmental, psychological, and economic impacts. Intense competition is observed among the companies to get the most significant share in the tourism sector, which affects 10.4 percent of G.D.P. across the world ($8.8 trillion) anywhere approximately 1.4bn people across the world take part, $1.643 trillion is spent, and 319m people are employed according to Nooripoor et al., (2021), Kimbu and Tichaawa (2018) and Sigala, (2020).

Tourism is widely considered one of the world's most significant and rapidly growing industries nature-based tourism directly depends on natural resources in a relatively undeveloped state, including scenery, water features, vegetation, and wildlife, (Cheng et al, 2022; Cisneros et al, 2020; Streimikiene et al, 2021). Tourism is recognized as an emergent industry in several countries, such as Indonesia, Thailand, Egypt, Spain, Greece, and others, due to its immense contribution to foreign exchange remunerations and employment

opportunities (Kimbu & Tichaawa, 2018). Tourism contributes to economic growth, personal income, savings and investments, and commercial activities in these countries.

In recent years, the tourism industry has witnessed a paradigm shift towards sustainability and responsible travel. Travelers are becoming increasingly conscious of the impact their choices have on the environment and local communities. As a result, sustainable destinations have gained considerable attention, offering unique experiences that align with eco-friendly practices and cultural preservation. This emerging trend has not only reshaped the landscape of the tourism industry but has also opened up new avenues for research (Ruhanen & Bowles, 2020; Seeler et al, 2022).

Sustainable tourism, also known as responsible tourism or eco-tourism, is an approach to travel and tourism that seeks to minimize its negative impacts on the environment, society, and local economies while maximizing the positive contributions to these aspects. The concept is rooted in the idea of achieving a balance between the economic benefits of tourism, the preservation of natural and cultural resources, and the well-being of local communities. Sustainable tourism aims to protect and preserve the natural environment. This involves minimizing pollution, conserving biodiversity, and promoting practices that reduce the overall ecological footprint of tourism activities (Seeler et al., 2022).

Sustainable tourism recognizes and respects the cultural and social values of host communities. It involves engaging with local traditions, supporting community initiatives, and ensuring that tourism activities contribute positively to the social dynamics of the destination and consumer behavior studies. Responsible tourism practices prioritize the well-being and empowerment of residents. on the other hand, Sustainable tourism seeks to create economic benefits that are distributed equitably among local stakeholders. This includes providing job opportunities for local residents, supporting local businesses, and ensuring that tourism revenue contributes to the overall economic development of the community. The goal is to prevent

economic leakage and enhance the socio-economic conditions of host communities (Mulyani et al., 2021; Sonuç, 2020).

The integration of sustainability into tourism is not merely a response to environmental and social challenges only but a strategic approach to ensure the long-term viability and competitiveness of destinations. By adopting sustainable practices, the tourism industry can continue to thrive while safeguarding the planet's resources and cultural heritage for future generations (Camison, 2020; El-Aidie et al., 2021). This responsible approach to tourism development is essential in an increasingly interconnected and environmentally conscious world. Economically, sustainable tourism seeks to ensure that the economic benefits of tourism are equitably distributed, supporting local economies and providing stable employment opportunities (Idahosa, 2019). This approach involves encouraging the development of local businesses, promoting destinations beyond popular hotspots to avoid over-tourism, and ensuring that tourism revenues contribute to local development (Perdana et al., 2021).

Environmental sustainability in tourism involves minimizing the carbon footprint of travel, protecting biodiversity, and conserving natural resources (Mancini et al., 2022). This includes practices like promoting eco-friendly accommodations, encouraging responsible wildlife tourism, and implementing sustainable transportation options. Social sustainability focuses on respecting local cultures, traditions, and communities. It aims to foster positive interactions between tourists and host communities, ensuring that tourism supports and does not exploit local populations (Mensah, 2019). Economically, sustainable tourism seeks to distribute the benefits of tourism more evenly, providing fair income to local businesses and workers while ensuring that tourism development does not lead to over-reliance on a single industry (Geoffrey et al., 2021). The rise of sustainable tourism reflects a growing awareness among travellers and industry stakeholders of the need to preserve destinations for future generations (VU et al., 2021). This shift is driven by an increasing recognition of the finite

nature of many natural and cultural resources and a broader societal push towards more ethical and responsible consumption patterns. Sustainable tourism not only enhances the travel experience by offering more meaningful and authentic encounters but also ensures the long-term viability and appeal of destinations (Miller et al., 2019). As such, it represents a strategic and ethical approach to tourism development, one that is crucial for the sustainability of the industry and the protection of the world's natural and cultural treasures (Jamal & Higham, 2021).

The Indonesian government, recognizing the critical importance of sustainable tourism, has initiated policies and programs to promote responsible travel practices (Rasool et al., 2021). These efforts are designed to protect Indonesia's environmental assets and cultural heritage while promoting economic growth (Parameswara et al., 2021). The focus is on developing eco-friendly infrastructure, encouraging community-based tourism projects, and raising awareness about sustainable practices among both tourists and the tourism industry (Lukman, 2020).

The challenge of sustainable tourism in Indonesia is amplified by the country's geographical diversity and the wide range of attractions it offers (Jaelani et al., 2023). From the majestic Borobudur and Prambanan temples, which are not only archaeological marvels but also centers of cultural and spiritual significance, to the unique ecosystems of Komodo National Park and the lush landscapes of Bali, sustainable tourism practices are essential to maintain the integrity and allure of these destinations (Petrucci, 2023). Moreover, the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, such as traditional dances, crafts, and ceremonies, is equally important in the context of sustainable tourism (Qiu et al., 2022). The phenomenon of sustainable tourism in Indonesia represents a complex interplay between environmental stewardship, cultural preservation, and economic development (Pickel-Chevalier et al., 2022). It embodies the recognition that the country's natural and cultural resources are not merely commodities to be consumed but treasures to be safeguarded. As Indonesia continues to attract

tourists from around the globe, the shift towards sustainable tourism practices offers a pathway to harmonize the growth of the tourism sector with the preservation of its unique heritage and the well-being of its people (Labadi et al., 2021).

Tourism's exponential growth over the past decades has been accompanied by a significant evolution in tourist behavior and expectations (Stylidis & Terzidou, 2023). Modern tourists seek more than just leisure; they are increasingly driven by a desire for unique, authentic experiences, cultural immersion, and personal growth (Holden et al., 2022). The industry has responded with diversified offerings, including eco-tourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism, and wellness tourism (Vumbunu, 2020). This diversification reflects an understanding of the varying motivations and expectations of tourists (Bayih & Singh, 2020). Within the sphere of tourist behavior, motivations and perceptions play a pivotal role. Escapism motivations, conceptualized as the desire to seek experiences away from the norm, are a significant driver of tourist decision-making. eWOM which refers to the information and recommendations exchanged among travellers through online platforms and social media. Similarly, affordability perceptions, encompassing both cost considerations and perceived value, are critical in shaping tourist choices (Cao et al, 2020; Pawaskar et al, 2020). These constructs are not just isolated elements but are part of a larger decision-making matrix that influences tourist behavior.

This study explored these dynamics in the context of the Borobudur and Prambanan temples. The Borobudur and Prambanan temples, both UNESCO World Heritage Sites, epitomize the delicate balance between preserving heritage and catering to the growing demands of global tourism (Black & Wall, 2001). These sites provide a rich context to examine how escapism motivations (the desire to seek experiences away from the norm) and affordability perceptions (tourists' views on the value and cost-effectiveness of a destination) impact tourists' loyalty to a destination. While there is extensive research on tourism and

sustainability, there is a gap in understanding how specific tourist motivations, such as escapism motivation and affordability perceptions, and eWOM influence destination loyalty.

The gap in the existing literature on the dynamics between escapism motivation, affordability perceptions, and destination loyalty has been notably identified, with studies presenting incongruent conclusions. As such, the nexus between escapism motivation (EM), affordability perceptions (AP), and destination loyalty (DL) remains a focal point of scholarly debate, characterized by inconsistent findings. On one hand, studies like Brandão et al., (2021) and Carvache et al., (2021) have found strong links between escapism, novelty, and destination loyalty. Carvache et al., (2021) particularly emphasized that "escape" and "novelty" were key predictors for return and recommendation, while Brandão et al., (2021) highlighted the role of leisure and relaxation, including escape from daily stress, in thermal tourism. Arowosafe et al., (2022) further supported this perspective by illustrating that tourists are drawn to specific sites due to pull factors like rock climbing and waterfalls, and push factors including socialization and escape from work. Conversely, research by M.Carvache et al, and (2022); Seyitoğlu & Davras, (2021) offers a contrasting view. Seyitoğlu and Davras, (2021) found that the direct influence of push motivations (including escapism) on tourist satisfaction and loyalty is weak. On the other hand, Mai et al., (2019) suggest that tourists' perceptions of affordability play a crucial role in their determination of a destination's attractiveness and their subsequent For instance, supported by Baloglu and McCleary (1999); Huete et al., (2020). But Ramesh and Jaunky, (2021) offer a contrasting view, where their research found that there is no relationship between affordability and destination loyalty. In this context, the proposed study aims to bridge these gaps by investigating the mediating role of visiting sustainable destination intention in the relationships between escapism motivation, affordability perceptions, eWOM, and destination loyalty.

Most existing studies focus on general tourist behaviors or the broader impacts of tourism on sustainability, without delving into the nuanced relationships between these specific motivations, perceptions, and sustainable destination intentions (Baloch et al., 2023). The study examines how escapism motivation, affordability perception, eWOM, and visiting sustainable destinations' intention affect destination loyalty. It also explores the impact of these factors on visiting sustainable destinations intention. Additionally, Academic frameworks, like Iso-Ahola's Theory of Motivation, have been instrumental in decoding the motivational tapestry of travelers, offering insights into the complex interplay of psychological impulses and market narratives in shaping travel desires (Thanabordeekij & Nipasuwan, 2017). The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) could be considered a suitable framework for studying the effects of eWOM on behaviors related to tourism, including the intention to visit sustainable destinations (Soliman, 2021). By examining how eWOM impacted attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, insights into its overall effect on destination loyalty and sustainable visiting intentions were gained.

The objective of this research is to contribute to the body of knowledge in tourism studies by providing empirical insights into how escapism motivations, eWOM, and affordability perceptions, mediated by visiting sustainable destinations' intention, influence destination loyalty. Through this exploration, this research seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on consumer behavior, expand the discourse on sustainability in tourism, and offer evidence-based recommendations that support the enduring allure and integrity of heritage sites as pillars of global tourism.

1.2 Sustainable Tourism Industry Phenomenon

A new era of travel is dawning, marked by a heightened focus on sustainability. As we navigate the aftermath of the global pandemic, a collective awareness has emerged, compelling us to reconsider the way we discover and engage with our magnificent world. Sustainable

tourism, a concept gaining significant traction, is instilling optimism for a future characterized by environmental responsibility. Let's explore the impactful transformation that sustainable tourism brings to our travel experiences, shaping a journey toward a greener and more conscientious exploration of our planet (Palacios-Florencio et al., 2021; Lama & Rai, 2021).

Post-pandemic tourism trends based on Nature, Ecotourism, Wellness tourism, and Adventure tourism (NEWA) have begun to be implemented in Indonesia's tourism sector. One of these trends is nature tourism, which is focused on inviting tourists to visit various natural areas to protect and preserve the environment. Meanwhile, the concept of ecotourism can be seen in the development of sustainable tourism in various tourist destinations. With its rich natural and cultural resources, the concept of ecotourism has great potential to become a unique selling point in the tourism and creative economy sectors in Indonesia (Wiartha et al., 2023).

In the post-Covid world, environmentally conscious practices are no longer a luxury but a necessity. Sustainable tourism encourages eco-friendly choices such as using renewable energy, reducing waste, and conserving water resources. From eco-lodges to green transportation options, travelers now have a plethora of sustainable choices to make their journeys more planet-friendly.
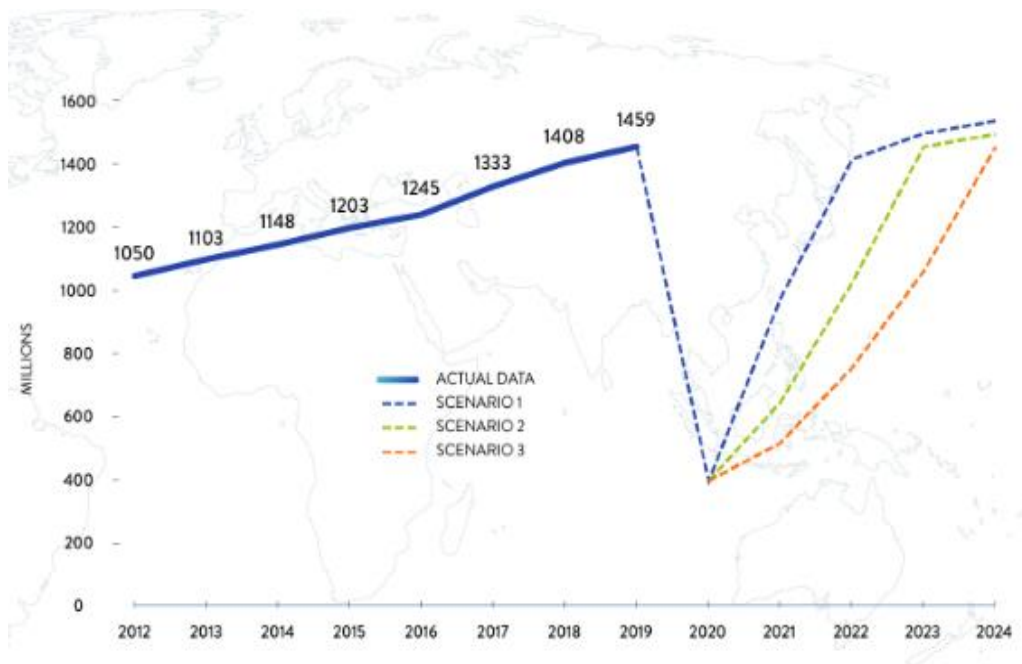
UNWTO, international tourists' arrival 2021- 2024.

Figure 1.1 confirms that the tourism industry, globally and in Indonesia, has entered a unique phase of recovery and transformation in the post-pandemic era, showing resilience and adaptability in the face of unprecedented challenges. The figures indicating projected international tourist arrivals until 2024 from the UNWTO suggest optimistic scenarios for the rebound of global tourism. Scenario 1 shows a steady increase, scenario 2 anticipates a more rapid recovery, and scenario 3 forecasts an even swifter resurgence, presumably underpinned by accelerated vaccination rates and easing of travel restrictions.

Table 1.1 Number of visitors to the Borobudur Temple tourist attraction

Month	Local Tourists			International Tourists		
	2020	2021	2022	2020	2021	2022
August	45 571	0	51 906	39	0	15 550
September	23 591	5 892	44 552	19	9	9 853
October	43 159	30 285	76 461	38	93	7 688
December	60 473	127 938	198 709	76	155	6 941
November	32 449	51 485	74 253	26	106	4 941
June	2 235	54 589	191 810	2	70	4 341
May	-	38 369	324 135	-	55	2 175
July	16 858	0	125 266	29	0	1 184
April	-	30 713	23 890	-	64	618
March	111 908	34 624	111 540	4 213	33	348
February	234 280	18 641	89 203	11 506	37	170
January	395 175	30 394	131 561	15 603	52	127
Total	**965 699**	**422 930**	**1 443 286**	**31 551**	**674**	**53 936**

Source: Dinas Pariwisata, Kepemudaan, dan Olahraga Kabupaten Magelang 2023

Table 1.1 shows the data from the Borobudur Temple highlights the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on international versus domestic tourism. Domestic tourism's faster recovery rate suggests that local visitors have become a critical lifeline for tourism-dependent sites during periods of global instability. This aligns with wider trends across the tourism industry, where domestic travel has been the first to recover, aided by fewer restrictions and the public's increasing confidence in local travel's safety.

In the year 2020, the numbers begin with what appears to be a typical flow of international visitors for the site, with January and February boasting 15,603 and 11,506 visitors, respectively. However, by March, a sharp decline sets in, mirroring the onset of the pandemic and associated global lockdowns and travel bans. The successive months show a steep fall in international arrivals, reaching single and double digits a stark contrast to the tens of thousands seen in the early part of the year. This decline is an immediate reflection of the

pandemic's impact, as countries closed their borders and halted almost all non-essential international travel.

However, 2022 starts to hint at a possible return, albeit modest, of international tourists. The numbers, while still minimal when compared to pre-pandemic levels, indicate that a small number of international travelers are beginning to visit the site again, with 127 visitors in January and progressively increasing each month, peaking in June with 4,341. This suggests a cautious optimism and may be a result of vaccine distribution, improved pandemic management, and a global eagerness to resume international travel, despite the remaining barriers. These suggest potential for a slow but steady return to pre-pandemic visitation levels, driven by the enduring appeal of the site and a global desire to reconnect with the world's cultural heritage.

Sumber : Hasil riset Tim KP PT Trisakti Pilar Persada // BPS Sleman

Figure 1.2 International tourists visiting Prambanan

figure 1.2 represents the data of international tourists visiting the Prambanan and Ratu Boko regions. The data reveals that Prambanan, among the three highlighted areas, attracted the highest number of international visitors, followed by Kalasan, with Berbah receiving the least.

These numbers may reflect several underlying factors that contribute to the appeal and accessibility of each site to an international audience.

Prambanan's significant lead in attracting international tourists may be attributed to its well-established reputation as a cultural and archaeological gem. As a UNESCO World Heritage site, Prambanan is renowned for its grandiose and intricate architectural design, representing a pinnacle of Hindu culture in Indonesia. Its towering structures and storied history provide a compelling draw for tourists seeking both aesthetic beauty and cultural enrichment.

The substantial international footfall in Prambanan can also be associated with its strategic positioning in the tourist circuit and the presence of comprehensive facilities catering to international standards. The area likely benefits from concerted promotional efforts that highlight its status as an iconic destination, as well as from the overall development of Java as a hospitable and tourist-friendly island. The figure also prompts an academic discussion on the distribution and management of tourism flows. It underscores the importance of sustainable tourism practices that ensure the conservation of the sites while providing high-quality visitor experiences. A balanced approach to tourism development can help manage the impact of high visitation in popular areas like Prambanan and distribute the economic benefits of tourism more evenly across the region.

Global Consumers Reasons for Travel

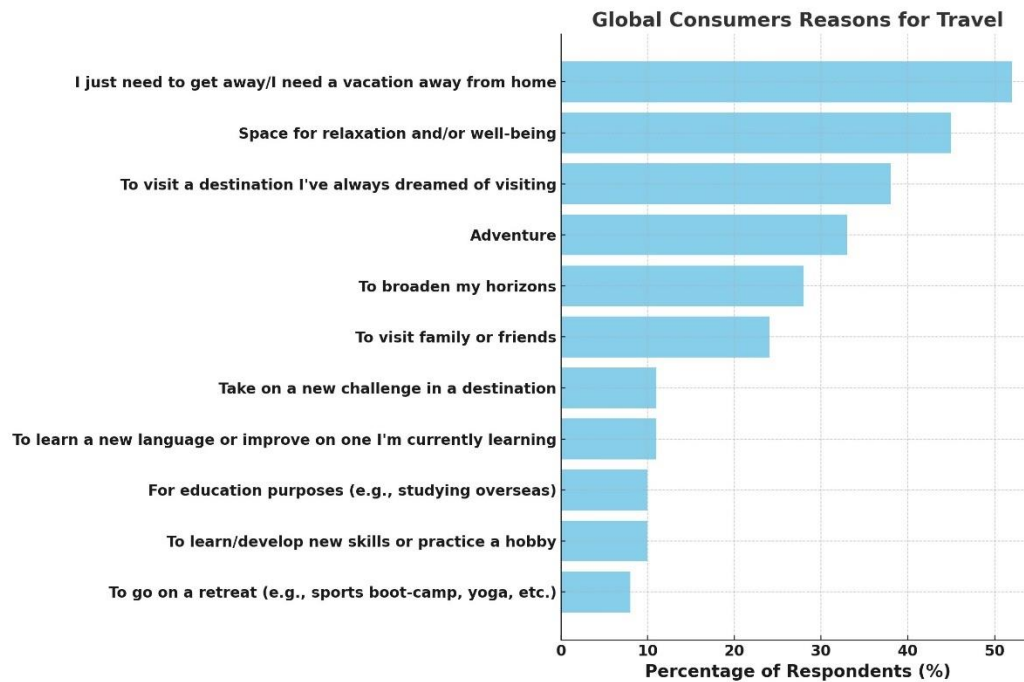| Reason	Percentage of Respondents (%)
I just need to get away/I need a vacation away from home	~52
Space for relaxation and/or well-being	~45
To visit a destination I've always dreamed of visiting	~38
Adventure	~33
To broaden my horizons	~28
To visit family or friends	~24
Take on a new challenge in a destination	~11
To learn a new language or improve on one I'm currently learning	~11
For education purposes (e.g., studying overseas)	~10
To learn/develop new skills or practice a hobby	~10
To go on a retreat (e.g., sports boot-camp, yoga, etc.)	~8

Figure 1.3 Global consumer's reasons for travel

Based on Figure 1.3 above YouGov Agency polled 13,375 consumers in eight key markets across the world on what they are looking for in their next vacation. The top travel motivator is simple: 52% of all global consumers say they need to get away from home (Escapism). The need to escape from routine and home life is strongest in France (61%), the UK (,59%), and Australia (56%), with close to three in five consumers in each market saying listing this as their top travel motivator.

To synthesize, the tourism industry is witnessing a period of dynamic change. On the one hand, there's an optimistic outlook for global travel, with Indonesia showing strong signs of recovery fuelled by domestic tourism. On the other hand, the emergence of new traveller motivations points to a paradigm shift, where destinations that align with the evolving emotional and psychological needs of tourists, as well as their financial expectations, may reap the benefits of increased loyalty. As the industry adapts, the focus may well shift from simply counting visitor numbers to deepening the understanding of what drives the modern tourist, a factor that will be central to sustainable, long-term growth in the sector.

1.3   Research Gap

This study will be based on several controversial theoretical and empirical findings from various studies on tourists' motivation and their decision to visit a sustainable destination during pos pandemic. There is a lack of understanding regarding the specific influence of escapism motivation, affordability perceptions, and eWOM on destination loyalty. Prior research has yielded inconsistent findings regarding the relationships between escapism motivation, affordability perceptions, and destination loyalty. Studies by Carvache et al. (2021), Brandão et al. (2021) emphasize the strong association between escapism, novelty, and destination loyalty, suggesting that aspects such as escape from daily stress and leisure play significant roles in influencing tourists' loyalty. However, Seyitoğlu and Davras (2021) offer a contrasting view, indicating a weak direct influence of escapism on tourist satisfaction and loyalty. Similarly, while some empirical evidence supports the importance of affordability perceptions in determining destination attractiveness and subsequent loyalty Mai et al., (2019), conflicting findings exist with Ramesh and Jaunky, (2021). In this context, the proposed study aims to bridge these gaps by investigating the mediating role of visiting sustainable destination intention in the relationships between escapism motivation, affordability perceptions, eWOM, and destination loyalty.

There is a lack of studies regarding the effect of eWOM on destination loyalty and most previous studies focused on research in the general field of hospitality and tourism (Nusair et al., 2019). While social media networks will continue to grow, there is a fundamental need to explore the current research literature on eWOM, social media, and its effect on tourism destination loyalty. While the growing body of research examining tourism destination selection has resulted in the existence of new research about eWOM and sustainable destinations (Arasli et al., 2021; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Paisri et al., 2022) it is study showed that eWOM has a significant impact on attitudes toward visiting a destination and intention to

travel, but when they used a mediating and moderating variables the results showed that there is inconsistency impact of eWOM on tourist intention to visit a destination, Aprilia and Kusumawati, (2021); Harahap and Dwita, (2020) Also, Tapanainen et al., (2021) found that no studies have focused on eWOM, and visiting sustainable destination intention and loyalty. This research attempts to take a more holistic approach by exploring the impact of escapism motivation, affordability perceptions, eWOM, and destination loyalty and bring the role of visiting sustainable destination intention as a mediating variable.

The body of tourism research presents diverse empirical evidence on factors influencing tourist behavior, yet often overlooks the intersection with sustainability at heritage sites. While studies like Wara et al. (2022); and Ramesh and Jaunky (2021) underscore the importance of affordability and visitor experience, their frameworks could be expanded to consider the sustainability of tourist practices in heritage contexts. Kim et al. (2021) explores motivational factors for visiting North Korea, suggesting a nuanced understanding of travel motivations that can be extended to examine how motivations align with sustainable tourism practices. This insight is crucial as it can guide the development of sustainable tourism offerings that cater to these motivations. Urbonavicius (2021) provides a gendered perspective on travel motivations, revealing differences in how internal motivations impact intentions to visit and recommend destinations. These findings could be further explored to understand how sustainable practices might be promoted differently among demographic groups to enhance the overall sustainability of a destination. Carvache et al. (2022) delve into the push and pull motivational dimensions in coastal tourism. Their study reveals the predictors of intentions to return and recommend a destination. However, the research does not deeply interrogate how these motivations can be reconciled with the need for sustainable tourism practices that ensure the long-term viability of coastal destinations.

Güzel et al. (2020) contribute by investigating the weak influence of push motivations on satisfaction, suggesting that other factors may play a more significant role in shaping tourist satisfaction and loyalty. This opens a gap for further investigation into how sustainability-related motivations may influence tourist behavior and satisfaction in heritage sites. Seyitoğlu and Davras (2021) probe into travel motivations and their impact on destination loyalty. Their work underlines the non-linear and complex relationship between various travel motivations and their effects on loyalty, indicating potential areas for sustainable tourism strategies to strengthen destination loyalty. Suhartanto et al. (2020) specifically link motivational factors with loyalty toward creative tourism attractions, highlighting the role of experience quality and perceived value. The relationship between these factors and sustainable practices at heritage sites presents a fertile area for research, seeking to understand how enhancing the perceived value of sustainability can foster deeper loyalty and sustainable behavior among tourists. Kim et al. (2022) underscore the positive impact of novelty-seeking on revisit intentions, which could be leveraged to promote heritage sites as sustainable tourism destinations. Furthermore, Mohaidin et al. (2017) reinforce the importance of environmental attitudes and word-of-mouth in selecting sustainable tourist destinations. These studies collectively suggest that tourist attitudes towards sustainability can be a significant factor in destination selection and loyalty, yet there is a paucity of research on how this plays out at heritage sites. By drawing together these threads, it becomes evident that while substantial research has examined various factors affecting tourist behavior, there remains a significant gap in understanding how these factors interact with and support sustainability, particularly in the context of heritage tourism.

1.4 Problem Identification

This study is anchored in the theoretical framework that posits the mediating role of sustainable destination visitation intention in shaping tourist behavior, drawing from a constructivist ontological stance that acknowledges the subjective interpretations of tourist

experiences, and an interpretive epistemology that seeks to understand the meanings individuals assign to their interactions with sustainable tourism practices. The research identifies a critical knowledge gap in comprehending the mechanisms by which intentions to visit sustainable destinations mediate the relationship between extrinsic motivators such as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and affordability perception and intrinsic motivators like escapism, ultimately impacting destination loyalty. This study seeks to demystify the theoretical intricacies of this mediating role, recognizing that a nuanced understanding can substantially inform the development of strategic initiatives aimed at bolstering sustainable tourism.

The Lack of understanding of the mediating role of visiting sustainable destinations intention: There may be a knowledge gap regarding the specific mechanisms through which visiting sustainable destinations Intention mediates the relationship between various factors (eWOM, escapism motivations, affordability perception, and destination loyalty. This lack of understanding may hinder the development of effective strategies for promoting sustainable tourism and enhancing destination loyalty.

Limited research on the influence of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on destination loyalty: The impact of eWOM, which refers to the online sharing of opinions and recommendations about destinations, on destination loyalty may not have been extensively explored. Understanding how eWOM influences destination loyalty is important for destination marketers to effectively utilize online platforms and social media in their promotional efforts (Alsheikh et al., 2021; Seyitoğlu & Davras, 2022). Insufficient investigation into the role of escapism motivations: The role of escapism motivations, which drive individuals to seek temporary relief from their everyday lives through travel, in influencing destination loyalty may not have been adequately examined. Identifying the extent to which escapism motivations affect destination loyalty can provide insights into how

destinations can create immersive and transformative experiences for visitors (Mirzaalian & Halpenny, 2021; Stylos et al., 2022).

Incomplete understanding of the impact of affordability perception: Affordability perception, which relates to visitors' beliefs about the economic feasibility of visiting a destination, may be overlooked in the context of destination loyalty (Abdul-Rahman et al., 2023). Determining how affordability perception influences destination loyalty can help destinations develop pricing strategies and promotional campaigns that attract and retain loyal visitors. Through addressing these identified issues, the research aspires to bridge the theoretical gaps and equip destination managers, marketers, and policymakers with strategic insights to cultivate sustainable tourism practices that not only promise immediate satisfaction but foster enduring loyalty.

1.5 Research Questions

The decisions travelers make, from choosing a destination to returning to it, are influenced by a complex interplay of factors. This research seeks to unravel the intricacies of these influences by exploring the relationships between various factors and the central construct of "destination loyalty." Understanding the drivers of destination loyalty is paramount to destination marketers, as it can profoundly impact the sustainability and growth of tourist destinations, and this research is proposing these questions to solve this problem:

1. Does escapism motivation, eWOM, and affordability perception have any effect on visiting sustainable destinations Intention?

2. Does escapism motivation and affordability perception have any effect on destination loyalty?

3. Does visiting sustainable destinations Intention have any effect on destination loyalty?

4. Does visiting sustainable destinations' Intention have a mediating effect on the relationship between escapism motivation, eWOM, affordability perception, and destination loyalty?

1.6   Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to explore the mediating role of visiting sustainable destinations Intention and its influence on destination loyalty. In particular, we aim to investigate the factors that mediate this relationship, namely electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), escapism motivations, and affordability perception. By understanding these mediating factors, we can gain valuable insights into the mechanisms through which sustainable destinations influence travelers' loyalty.

1. To examine the effects of Escapism Motivation, eWOM, and Affordability Perception on Visit Sustainable Destination Intention.

2. To assess the effect of escapism motivation and affordability perception on destination loyalty.

3. To investigate the effect of sustainable destination intention on destination loyalty.

4. To explore the mediating effect of visiting sustainable destination intention on the relationship between Escapism Motivation, eWOM, and Affordability Perception with Destination Loyalty.

1.7   Significance Of Study

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the understanding of the mediating role of visiting sustainable destinations Intention and the influence of eWOM, escapism motivations, and affordability perception, on destination loyalty. By investigating these relationships and dynamics, valuable insights can be gained, and several important implications can be derived.

Advancement of knowledge in sustainable tourism: The understanding of sustainable tourism can be furthered through this study, as the mediating role of visiting sustainable destinations Intentions explored. By examining the mechanisms through which sustainable destinations mediate the relationship between various factors and destination loyalty, a deeper comprehension of sustainable practices in the tourism industry can be achieved. Bridging

research gaps, this study fills gaps in the existing research by investigating the influence of multiple factors, such as eWOM, escapism motivations, and affordability perception, on destination loyalty. By exploring the connections between these variables, a more comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping tourists' loyalty towards destinations can be obtained (Seyfi et al., 2021; Yang & Wong, 2020).

Support for sustainable destination management: The findings of this study have practical implications for destination management. By emphasizing the mediating role of visiting sustainable destinations, the importance of sustainable practices in attracting and retaining loyal tourists is underscored. This knowledge can guide destination managers in developing and implementing sustainable strategies and initiatives that enhance destination loyalty. Enhancement of marketing strategies gave valuable insights for destination marketers can be derived from this study. By examining the influence of eWOM, escapism motivations, affordability perception, and destination loyalty, the foundation for developing targeted marketing campaigns can be provided. Understanding these factors enables marketers to tailor their promotional efforts to effectively communicate the value of sustainable destinations, address affordability concerns, and leverage positive online reviews. Contribution to policy development by an emphasis on sustainable destinations in this study aligns with the increasing significance of sustainability in tourism policies. The research findings can contribute to the development of policies and guidelines supporting sustainable tourism practices. Policymakers can utilize the insights gained from this study to create frameworks that promote the adoption of sustainable practices and encourage destinations to prioritize sustainability in their operations (Liu-Lastres et al., 2019; Pappas & Glyptou, 2021).

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the study's relevance is particularly pronounced. The tourism industry faces the urgent task of recovery and reinvention. This research provides a timely examination of the factors that could accelerate recovery and reshape the industry

toward a more resilient and sustainable future. The insights gained may help destinations to rebuild and reposition themselves in a competitive post-pandemic market, addressing the changing preferences and expectations of travelers.

In summary, this study's significance lies in its contribution to the understanding of sustainable tourism, its implications for destination management and marketing strategies, its insights for risk management and crisis communication, and its potential influence on policy development. By investigating the interplay of various factors, valuable knowledge is generated for stakeholders in the tourism industry aiming to foster destination loyalty and sustainable practices.

1.8 Originality Of Research

This research introduces an innovative structural model that encapsulates Visiting Sustainable Destination Intention as a core concept, particularly within the heritage tourism contexts of Borobudur and Prambanan. This novel approach is poised to fill a conspicuous void in tourism literature by explicitly delineating how this intention serves as a pivotal mediating factor, which, to date, has not been sufficiently illuminated within the scholarly domain. Foregrounding the unique cultural and historical significance of Borobudur and Prambanan, the study delves into the nuanced interplay of escapism motivations, eWOM, and affordability perceptions and their collective impact on destination loyalty a synergy that remains largely unexplored. The construct of Visiting Sustainable Destination Intention is meticulously proposed to deepen the academic comprehension of the pathways influencing tourists' loyalty, particularly how they reconcile the informational influence of eWOM with the psychological drive of escapism and the pragmatic considerations of affordability.

By scrutinizing these interrelations and proposing a mediation model, this dissertation strives to unravel the intricate weave of factors that foster loyalty to heritage sites, marking a

distinctive contribution to the field. The clear articulation of this mediation model not only advances theoretical frameworks but also proffers a tangible construct for industry practitioners aiming to enhance sustainable practices within heritage tourism. The research's originality is thus manifest in its comprehensive, multi-dimensional investigation of destination loyalty, asserting Visiting Sustainable Destination Intention not as a peripheral element but as an integral mediator that coherently ties the array of motivational factors to the enduring commitment of tourists to heritage destinations.

1.9 Summary

Chapter 1 establishes the context and significance of exploring sustainable tourism and its influence on destination loyalty, specifically through the lens of Borobudur and Prambanan temples. It outlines the emergence of sustainable tourism as a pivotal factor in modern tourism management and how it impacts tourist behaviors and loyalty. The chapter delineates the research background, identifies the gaps in the current academic literature, and sets forth the research questions and objectives designed to bridge these gaps. Additionally, the chapter emphasizes the relevance of this study to the broader fields of marketing and management within tourism. It concludes by setting the stage for a thorough review of the literature in Chapter 2, providing a seamless transition into a deeper exploration of theoretical frameworks and previous research findings related to sustainable tourism.