

## Cikondang Waterfall as an Ecotourism Destination: Factors Affecting Revisit Intention

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of destination image, novelty seeking, tourist experience, and perceived risk on tourist satisfaction and their subsequent impact on revisit intention at Curug Cikondang Ecotourism, West Java, Indonesia. Employing a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design, data were collected through an online survey of 280 respondents who had visited the site within the past year. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using AMOS 26 was applied for data analysis. The findings reveal that destination image, novelty seeking, and tourist experience significantly enhance satisfaction, while perceived risk reduces it. Tourist satisfaction strongly predicts revisit intention, underscoring its mediating role. The results provide theoretical contributions to ecotourism research and practical insights for sustainable destination management.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Tourism plays a vital role in driving economic growth and sustainable development across various regions. Indonesia's distinctive natural and cultural assets present significant opportunities for tourism development, particularly in West Java Province. Curug Cikondang, located in Cianjur Regency, is one such site with considerable potential that has yet to be fully realized. The waterfall is renowned for its spectacular scenery and is often referred to as a "Mini Niagara" due to its resemblance to the famous North American falls (Galih, 2021). Unfortunately, field observations indicate that the destination still faces several challenges, most notably the lack of strong local government commitment to destination development, especially regarding environmental sustainability. Climate change and prolonged droughts exacerbate these issues by reducing water flow, limiting the site's attractiveness, and directly affecting visitor experiences (Winata, 2023). In the context of nature-based tourism such as ecotourism, environmental quality significantly influences both visitor satisfaction and revisit intention. This underscores the necessity for destination management strategies that integrate environmental concerns with visitor well-being.

Within the tourism literature, tourist experience is often regarded as a critical determinant of loyalty and revisit intention. Numerous studies highlight the role of destination image in shaping satisfaction. Destination image is typically categorized into cognitive and affective dimensions: the cognitive dimension refers to tourists' impressions and understanding of destination attributes such as attractions, accessibility, and supporting facilities, while the affective dimension reflects the emotions and sentiments generated during the tourism experience (Dewi et al., 2024). Understanding how tourists perceive a destination provides strategic insights for managers to strengthen its image. Other research emphasizes that destination image is influenced by broader dimensions, including natural attractions, physical environment, infrastructure, and tourism services (Hanifa & Komaryatin, 2024). In short, a favorable destination image increases the likelihood of tourist satisfaction and repeat visitation, making it essential to enhance the image of developing sites such as Curug Cikondang.

Beyond destination image, novelty seeking—the desire to experience something new—also shapes tourist behavior. Visitors are not only seeking leisure but also distinctive and memorable experiences that create lasting impressions (V. Sharma et al., 2023). Activities such as exploring hidden waterfalls, rafting, or trekking through nature trails exemplify novel experiences that enhance tourists' psychological and emotional satisfaction. Novelty-driven encounters often provide a different sense of fulfillment compared to revisiting familiar destinations. Empirical evidence shows that novelty seeking significantly contributes to tourist satisfaction because unexpected and unique encounters leave enduring memories (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022). Preko et al. (2019) further demonstrate that tourists motivated by novelty tend to develop stronger loyalty and higher revisit intentions. This dimension is particularly relevant in ecotourism, where attractions commonly integrate adventure,

education, and environmental preservation. Similarly, Nguyen et al. (2020) found that novelty seeking directly impacts both satisfaction and revisit intention, particularly when experiences evoke emotional connections with visitors.

The tourist experience itself represents an equally critical factor in shaping post-visit evaluations. Defined as emotional involvement, social connection, and personal achievements gained during a visit (P. Sharma & Nayak, 2019), tourist experience extends beyond mere sightseeing to encompass meaningful and memorable engagements. Positive experiences during a trip are strongly associated with higher satisfaction and stronger revisit intentions (Guo et al., 2024). Destinations offering unique experiences are more likely to secure visitor loyalty. In ecotourism, this includes not only recreational aspects but also educational and ecological dimensions that enrich the experience.

Together, destination image, novelty seeking, and tourist experience collectively influence tourist satisfaction, which in turn drives revisit intention. Prior research consistently highlights satisfaction as a mediator between visitor perceptions and revisit behavior (Suhartanto et al., 2020). When tourists are satisfied, they are more likely to revisit and to recommend the destination to others. Delivering high-quality services and experiences that meet or exceed expectations significantly fosters visitor loyalty (Li et al., 2021). Other studies highlight the moderating role of perceived risk and comfort in shaping decisions (Xie et al., 2020). Destination image may influence satisfaction indirectly by shaping perceptions of risk and destination value (Albaity & Melhem, 2017). Ultimately, revisit intention is closely tied to the quality of actual experiences obtained during a visit (Viet et al., 2020). Satisfaction emerges when expectations are fulfilled or surpassed, thereby reinforcing loyalty (Cong, 2021). Satisfied visitors are not only more likely to return but also to share their positive experiences with others (Bernarto et al., 2022). However, most existing studies remain situated within general tourism frameworks, often overlooking the distinct characteristics of ecotourism. Unlike mass tourism, ecotourism integrates environmental education, conservation, and community empowerment (Anggraini et al., 2024). Key elements such as the quality of interpretive education, dedication to environmental preservation, and active community participation directly influence satisfaction and loyalty. Unfortunately, these factors are rarely incorporated into comprehensive models of tourist loyalty (Budiarti et al., 2024), leaving a gap in understanding how ecotourism-specific elements shape visitor behavior, particularly with respect to satisfaction and revisit intention.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the relationships among destination image, novelty seeking, and tourist experience in shaping revisit intention, with tourist satisfaction as a mediating variable, within the context of Curug Cikondang Ecotourism. This site was chosen because, despite its vast natural potential, it has been underexplored in terms of ecotourist behavior. The study contributes theoretically by expanding knowledge on visitor behavior in ecotourism contexts, an area that remains underrepresented in prior research. Practically, it offers insights for destination managers and stakeholders to design

management strategies that simultaneously enhance visitor satisfaction, promote environmental sustainability, and foster local community involvement.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The relationship between destination image and tourist satisfaction has been widely confirmed in the literature (H1: Destination Image has a positive and significant effect on Tourist Satisfaction). Zhao et al. (2024) and Hasan et al. (2020) demonstrated that a positive destination image can significantly enhance tourist satisfaction and even foster loyalty through revisit intention. However, additional factors such as tourist involvement, destination authenticity, event quality, and available facilities further strengthen this influence (Jeong & Kim, 2020). Xie et al. (2020) added another perspective by emphasizing the moderating role of perceived risk, while Šerić et al. (2024) highlighted sustainable destination image as a driver of satisfaction and local pro-sustainability responses. Thus, destination image functions not only as a predictor of satisfaction but also as a perceptual framework shaping the overall tourist experience.

Tourists' motivation to seek new experiences, or novelty seeking, has also been shown to be an important driver of satisfaction (H2: Novelty Seeking has a positive and significant effect on Tourist Satisfaction). Studies by Preko et al. (2019) and Nguyen et al. (2020) confirmed that tourists motivated by novelty tend to feel more satisfied and demonstrate stronger revisit intentions. Albaity dan Melhem (2017) further argued that novelty seeking contributes to the development of a positive destination image, which subsequently enhances satisfaction and loyalty. Beyond direct experiences, smart tourism technologies can also provide novelty that contributes to tourist satisfaction (Goo et al., 2022). From a theoretical perspective, within the framework of Customer Satisfaction Theory (CSAT), tourists whose expectations of novelty are fulfilled are more likely to experience higher levels of satisfaction.

In addition, tourist experience plays a significant role in influencing satisfaction (H3: Tourist Experience has a positive and significant effect on Tourist Satisfaction). Memorable experiences, whether emotional or physical, help build positive memories that encourage revisit intention (P. Sharma & Nayak, 2019, 2020). Suhartanto et al. (2020) emphasized that creative and interactive experiences enhance both tourism value and satisfaction, while Torabi et al. (2022) found that smart technologies can create more personalized and interactive experiences. Accordingly, the more positive the tourist experience, the greater the likelihood of achieving satisfaction, which in turn fosters loyalty.

Conversely, perceived risk often negatively affects tourist satisfaction (H4: Perceived Risk has a negative and significant effect on Tourist Satisfaction). Viet et al. (2020) and Bernarto et al. (2022) confirmed that high levels of perceived risk can reduce satisfaction, although a strong destination image and fair pricing strategies may mitigate this effect. Safety, health, and public opinion are also crucial in shaping tourists' risk perceptions (Quan et al., 2020; Xie et al., 2020). Within the CSAT framework, high perceived risk widens the gap between expectations and actual experiences, thereby lowering satisfaction, whereas well-managed risks enhance tourists' sense of security and comfort.

Finally, tourist satisfaction serves as a primary determinant of revisit intention (H5: Tourist Satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on Revisit Intention). Satisfaction derived from authentic experiences, service quality, or technological innovations contributes significantly to tourists' willingness to return (Bayih & Singh, 2020; Fitri, 2021; Suhud et al., 2022). Factors such as safety, comfort, and holistic value further reinforce this relationship, particularly during challenging periods such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Humagain & Singleton, 2021). Theoretically, in line with the CSAT model, satisfaction represents the evaluation of congruence between initial expectations and actual experiences. When experiences meet or exceed expectations, loyalty emerges in the form of repeat visits and positive recommendations.

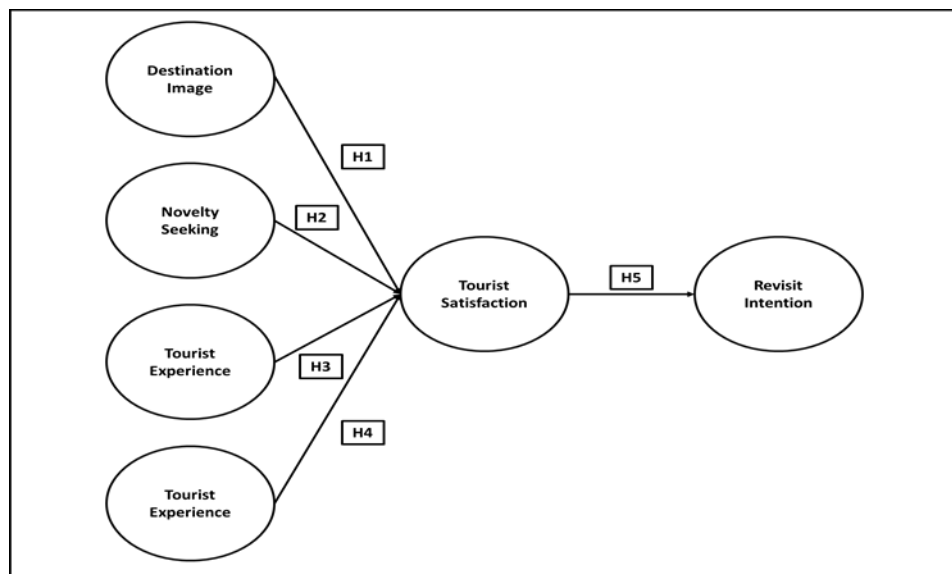


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a survey research design with a quantitative approach, complemented by qualitative field observations. Primary data were collected through a closed-ended questionnaire distributed online to tourists who were currently visiting or had visited Curug Cikondang within the past year, using a purposive sampling technique. The sample size was determined based on the guideline proposed by Hair et al. (2019), which requires a minimum of 5–10 times the number of indicators. With 28 indicators, the required sample size amounted to 280 respondents. Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS 26, which included validity testing through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), reliability testing using Construct Reliability (CR), and hypothesis testing through Goodness-of-Fit assessments (absolute, incremental, and parsimony fit indices).

## RESEARCH RESULT

Table 1. Validity and Reliability Test

Variable	Indicator	Loading Value	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Cronbach Alpha	Construct Reliability (CR)
<i>Destination Image (DI)</i>	DI1	0,895	0,675	0,932	0,912
	DI2	0,868			
	DI3	0,913			
	DI4	0,746			
	DI5	0,882			
<i>Novelty Seeking (NS)</i>	NS1	0,761	0,671	0,918	0,891
	NS2	0,896			
	NS3	0,892			
	NS4	0,900			
<i>Tourist Experience (TE)</i>	TE1	0,901	0,691	0,934	0,918
	TE2	0,913			
	TE3	0,887			
	TE4	0,741			
	TE5	0,882			
<i>Perceived Risk (PR)</i>	PR1	0,892	0,658	0,910	0,875
	PR2	0,881			
	PR3	0,905			
	PR4	0,742			
<i>Tourist Satisfaction (TS)</i>	TS1	0,833	0,598	0,894	0,881
	TS2	0,678			
	TS3	0,820			
	TS4	0,842			
	TS5	0,813			
<i>Revisit Intention (RI)</i>	RI1	0,896	0,663	0,918	0,907
	RI2	0,870			
	RI3	0,675			
	RI4	0,883			
	RI5	0,878			

Based on the table above, it can be concluded that all constructs in the structural model met the requirements for convergent validity, as all Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.5. This indicates that each construct was able to explain the variance of its respective indicators. Furthermore, the Construct Reliability (CR) values were above the minimum threshold of 0.7. Thus, it can be concluded that all constructs in this research model satisfied the criteria for good construct reliability.

Table 2. CFA Test

Model Index	Cut Off Value	Result Test 1	Conclusion Test 1	Result Test 2	Conclusion Test 2
Chi-Square	378.682 (Test 1) 368.042 (Test 2)	286,406	Not Fit	286,406	Fit
Probability Level	≥ 0,05	0,125	Not Fit	0,125	Fit
CMIN/DF	≤ 2,00	1,102	Fit	1,102	Fit
RMSEA	≤ 0,08	0,019	Fit	0,019	Fit
TLI	≥ 0,95	0,995	Fit	0,995	Fit
CFI	≥ 0,95	0,996	Fit	0,996	Fit
GFI	≥ 0,90	0,927	Fit	0,927	Fit

The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) test was conducted twice, as the first analysis indicated that some model indices did not fit. To achieve a good model fit, several indicators were eliminated. Consequently, in the second CFA test, all model indices showed satisfactory fit results.

Table 3. Goodness of Fit of Construct Model

Model Index	Cut off value	Model Result	Conclusion
Chi-Square	378.682	384,374	Not Fit
Probability Level	≥ 0,05	0,000	Not Fit
CMIN/DF	≤ 2,00	1,456	Fit
RMSEA	≤ 0,08	0,040	Fit
TLI	≥ 0,95	0,978	Fit
CFI	≥ 0,95	0,981	Fit
GFI	≥ 0,90	0,906	Fit

Subsequently, a goodness-of-fit test was conducted on the research model. The results showed that the chi-square and probability level values did not meet the cut-off criteria; however, other Goodness-of-Fit indices did meet the requirements. This indicates that the model could be continued. Hair et al. (2019) noted that as models become more complex and sample sizes increase, the chi-square and probability levels become less reliable as fit measures, as they are strongly influenced by model complexity and sample size. Since this study included six variables and a sample size of 280, Hair et al. (2019) suggested that when research models involve twelve or fewer variables and sample sizes exceed 250, alternative Goodness-of-Fit measures may be employed, while still reporting chi-square and probability level results. Based on Table 3, only the chi-square and probability level did not fit, while other indices met the criteria, indicating that this model could be used for hypothesis testing.

Table 3. Hypothesis Test

No	Hypothesis	Coefficient Estimate	CR	p-Value	Conclusion
1	Destination Image → Tourist Satisfaction (H1)	0,360	6.504	***	Significant, positive
2	Novelty Seeking → Tourist Satisfaction (H2)	0,257	4.714	***	Significant, positive
3	Tourist Experience → Tourist Satisfaction (H3)	0,293	5.475	***	Significant, positive
4	Perceived Risk → Tourist Satisfaction (H4)	-0,376	-	***	Significant, negative
5	Tourist Satisfaction → Revisit Intention (H5)	0,799	14.040	***	Significant, positive

The hypothesis testing results revealed that Destination Image, Novelty Seeking, and Tourist Experience each had a significant positive effect on Tourist Satisfaction, with p-values < 0.05 and CR values of 6.416, 4.400, and 5.232, respectively. The direct effects were 0.360 (36%), 0.257 (25.7%), and 0.293 (29.3%), indicating that a positive perception of the destination, the desire for novelty, and meaningful travel experiences significantly enhance tourist satisfaction. Conversely, Perceived Risk demonstrated a significant negative effect on Tourist Satisfaction, with a p-value < 0.05, a CR of -9.884, and a direct effect of -0.376 (37.6%), suggesting that higher perceived risks reduce tourist satisfaction. Finally, Tourist Satisfaction exhibited the strongest and most significant influence on Revisit Intention, with a p-value < 0.05, a CR of 14.095, and a direct

effect of 0.799 (79.9%), confirming its central role as the key determinant of tourists' intention to return to Curug Cikondang.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings indicate that tourist satisfaction is highly influenced by their perceptions of destination image. This aligns with the characteristics of the majority of respondents, who were young, energetic, and highly educated, with elevated expectations of tourism quality. The perception of Curug Cikondang as a safe, clean, and valuable destination strengthened its positive image in the eyes of tourists. This image was shaped not only by the physical condition of the site but also by the direct experiences visitors had during their trip. This study supports the findings of Dewi et al. (2024) and Hanifa & Komaryatin (2024), which reported that a strong destination image can shape positive tourist sentiments and enhance overall satisfaction.

Furthermore, novelty seeking was found to significantly enhance satisfaction. Curug Cikondang offers unique experiences not commonly found at other waterfalls, such as rafting and rugged nature exploration. Most respondents scored highly in novelty-seeking tendencies, indicating their desire to try new things. This is consistent with Preko et al. (2019) and Rasoolimanesh et al. (2022), who argued that unique encounters leave lasting impressions and significantly impact satisfaction. Tourists' desire to break away from routine through intensive and diverse nature-based activities reinforces novelty as a key driver of ecotourism.

Tourist experience was also found to significantly influence satisfaction. Descriptive results indicated that visitors' experiences at Curug Cikondang were both enjoyable and unique. These experiences included direct contact with nature, social interactions, and personal achievements such as successfully reaching the waterfall. As highlighted by Sharma and Nayak (2019) and Guo et al. (2024), such immersive experiences strengthen tourists' emotional attachment to destinations. Visitors did not merely come to admire the scenery but also to create personal memories, which substantially enhanced their satisfaction.

However, the findings revealed that perceived risk negatively affected satisfaction. Tourists faced various concerns such as poor access, safety issues during the trip, and pricing. This was reflected in the relatively lower descriptive scores for perceived risk compared to other factors, suggesting that some respondents still experienced anxiety when visiting Curug Cikondang. These findings are consistent with Cong (2021) and Xie et al. (2020), who noted that perceived risk can disrupt a sense of safety and comfort, thereby reducing satisfaction levels. Destination managers should address these perceptions by improving facilities, providing clear information, and strengthening safety systems.

The most significant finding of this research was the strong influence of tourist satisfaction on revisit intention. Tourists were more likely to return when they were satisfied with their visit. The highest-scoring item in Revisit Intention was the willingness to recommend Curug Cikondang, suggesting that satisfaction not only fosters loyalty but also generates positive word-of-mouth

advocacy. These results support prior studies by Suhud et al. (2022), Suhartanto et al. (2020), and Li et al. (2021), which concluded that satisfaction is the most critical determinant of long-term tourist loyalty.

Overall, the findings of this study suggest that efforts to increase tourist visits to Curug Cikondang should focus on enhancing destination image, providing novel and engaging experiences, and implementing effective risk management. In the context of ecotourism, these efforts must also align with sustainable and participatory management practices. Although tourists expressed high satisfaction, there remains room for improvement, particularly in reducing perceived risks and improving supporting facilities. These findings carry practical implications, including the need for collaboration among local governments, tourism managers, and communities to create safe, innovative, and memorable tourism experiences.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study demonstrates that destination image, novelty seeking, and tourist experience significantly and positively influence tourist satisfaction, while perceived risk exerts a significant negative effect. Furthermore, tourist satisfaction emerges as the strongest determinant of revisit intention, confirming its role as a key mediating variable within the framework of Customer Satisfaction Theory (CSAT). Theoretically, these findings enrich the tourism literature by highlighting the dynamics of tourist behavior in the context of ecotourism, while practically, they provide valuable insights for destination managers. Strengthening destination image through digital promotion, enhancing accessibility and basic infrastructure, developing novelty-based attractions, and improving safety facilities are essential strategies to increase satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, involving local communities in destination management ensures sustainability and shared benefits. For future research, expanding the model by incorporating variables such as place attachment, environmental awareness, or social media engagement, as well as applying mixed-method approaches or comparative studies across ecotourism destinations, is recommended to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of tourist loyalty in Indonesia.

## **ADVANCED RESEARCH**

Although this study provides significant and relevant findings, several limitations must be acknowledged. The sample predominantly consisted of respondents from the Greater Jakarta (Jabodetabek) area, which restricts the generalizability of the results, as tourist motivations, risk perceptions, and experiences may vary across regions in Indonesia. The research was also limited to six constructs—Destination Image, Novelty Seeking, Tourist Experience, Perceived Risk, Tourist Satisfaction, and Revisit Intention—while other factors such as emotional attachment, social media influence, local culture, and service quality may also play important roles. Methodologically, the study relied solely on a quantitative survey approach, which may not fully capture the subjective dimensions of tourist experiences; qualitative or mixed-method approaches

could provide richer insights. Moreover, the research focused exclusively on Curug Cikondang, limiting applicability to destinations with different characteristics, such as cultural or artificial attractions. The time-bound nature of the study also raises the possibility that results were influenced by contextual factors like weather, holiday seasons, or tourism trends during data collection. Future research is encouraged to address these limitations by expanding the geographic scope, incorporating additional variables, adopting more diverse methodological approaches, and comparing different types of destinations to produce more comprehensive and generalizable insights that contribute to sustainable tourism development in Indonesia.

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