Published online on the journal's web page: http://jurnal.usahid.ac.id/index.php/jamr

eISSN: 2797-2917

Journal of Applied Management Research

Decision Making Factors In An Ecotourism Visit In The Situ Gunung Natural Tourism Park West Java

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: 04 April 2024
Revised: 30 April 2024
Accepted: 22 May 2024

Keywords:

Ecotourism Revisit, Cleanliness perception, Ticket price differentiation, NTP Situ Gunung, SmartPLS

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ABSTRACT

The Situ Gunung Nature Tourism Park (NTP) is a conservation area that was developed by prioritizing the concept of ecotourism. However, the ecotourism program created could have been more optimal, considering the requests and desires of visitors. This research aims to determine the factors that underlie decision-making for ecotourism visits at NTP Situ Gunung, West Java. The variables explained include the concept of ecotourism, intention to revisit, perception of cleanliness, and ticket price differentiation. The method used in this research is SmartPLS to test the proposed hypothesis. The analysis results show that ticket prices negatively influence ecotourism visits, with a coefficient of -0.058 (H1). On the other hand, cleanliness has a positive effect with a coefficient of 0.224 (H2), and security has a positive impact of 0.180 (H3). The accessibility factor is proven to have the most significant influence on ecotourism visits, with a coefficient of 0.464 (H4). The results of this research indicate that to increase ecotourism visits, managers need to focus on improving accessibility and cleanliness, as well as reconsidering ticket pricing strategies. Thus, this research contributes to the development of ecotourism that is more responsive to visitor needs and preferences, increasing visits and supporting conservation desires at Situ Gunung NTP.

Published by LPPM Usahid
ISSN 2797-2917 –

1. INTRODUCTION

One natural tourism area also being developed as adventure tourism in Sukabumi Regency is the Situ Gunung Nature Tourism Park (NTP). As a utilization zone for the Gede Pangrango Mount National Park (TNGGP), as the name suggests, NTP functions as a nature-based tourism area (Sukwika & Kasih, 2020; Sukwika & Rahmatulloh, 2021; Malini et al., 2023; Situmorang et al., 2024). One of the tourism sectors developed by the Sukabumi Regency Government is natural tourism, one of which is the Situ Gunung Nature Tourism Park (NTP). The Situ Gunung NTP is located in a conservation area, which was developed by prioritizing the concept of ecotourism. However, the ecotourism programs that have been created have yet to consider visitors' requests and desires optimally. Ecotourism is a tourist trip to an environment, both natural and artificial, and existing culture that is informative and participatory and aims to ensure natural and socio-cultural sustainability. The main attraction of this area is the tropical rainforest landscape at the foot of the mountain, which has a diversity of plants and trees that support it. Situ Gunung Sukabumi also has several tourist spots: Curug-Sawer Waterfall, Lembah-Purba Waterfall, Keranjang-Sultan, Floating Lodge Lake Situ Gunung, and Flying Fox. There are also overnight tour packages at Situ Gunung that can be enjoyed at Glamping or Camping Grounds (Sukwika & Rahmatulloh, 2021).

A place can become a tourist destination for various reasons, including its attractiveness, complete facilities, cleanliness, and ease of access. Tourist Attraction is anything that triggers a person or group of people to

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.36441/jamr

visit a place because it has a specific meaning. Tourism must contain elements of cleanliness, namely those in the five charms of tourism. The element of cleanliness is one of the essential elements in tourism products; by maintaining the cleanliness of the environment of tourist attractions, it will be able to provide pleasant and comfortable services for tourists, thereby creating "interest" in revisiting these tourist attractions Hapsara & Ahmadi (2022), Sukamdani et al. (2022), Firmansyah (2023a), Sukwika & Kasih (2020) and Basiya & Rozak (2012) explain that the attractiveness of tourist destinations, including cleanliness at tourist locations, is the primary motivation for visitors to visit.

The popularity of NTP Situ Gunung can be seen from tourist visits, which increase yearly. In terms of accessibility, the location of NTP Situ Gunung is divided into three routes. Likewise, for ticket prices, NTP Situ Gunung management offers very diverse ticket prices (Sukwika & Rahmatulloh, 2021). Situ Gunung entrance ticket prices are divided based on access. There are three routes with different facilities; here are the explanations: (1) Green Route Access, namely this route has the shortest distance, only 1.5 kilometers. Visitors will be delivered by shelter vehicles that can summarize the distance traveled. This route is usually called the VIP route. Ticket prices start from IDR 100,000 for one person. (2) Access to the Yellow Line, namely the Yellow Line, is approximately 2.5 kilometers long. This route passes through rocky mountain tracks to the Suspension Bridge. (3) Red Line Access, namely access to the NTP location with the furthest distance, is around 3.7 kilometers. On the return route, the road conditions are more uphill and winding. Tickets are sold at the cheapest price, namely IDR 50,000. One marketing strategy is through a pricing strategy; in a tourist attraction, there is always pricing of tickets and rides that makes the tourism appropriate to the benefits visitors receive after visiting the attraction. Nabila (2019), Suryani & Wahyu (2018), and Widayati & Widiastuti (2022) explain that the price set by a tourist attraction will also have a significant influence on a person's decision to visit.

In this area, a new artificial tourist attraction has been built in the form of a bridge called the Suspension Bridge. The longest suspension bridge in Southeast Asia will add value to the tourist attraction because tourists can see the beauty of Situ Gunung NTP from a different perspective. It can increase the intensity of visitors in the Situ Gunung NTP area. Tourists are offered views of the TNGGP forest from a 243-meter-long bridge with a height of 121 meters and a width of 1.8 meters (Sukwika & Rahmatulloh, 2021). Of course, the safety of tourists must be prioritized to avoid potential risks that could arise.

NTP Situ Gunung is a category of adventure tourism that, in its implementation, involves physical activities that stimulate adrenaline. Even though it is included in the category of light adventure tourism, the main characteristic of adventure tourism is that risks are involved. Perception of risk and security is a crucial factor influencing tourist satisfaction and intention to visit again (Adinda et al., 2022; Khasawneh & Alfandi, 2019). Previous research found that high perceived risk and security levels will reduce tourist satisfaction and negatively influence intentions to make repeat visits (Sohn et al., 2016; Nurdiana & Santoso, 2023; Sukwika & Nurwisata, 2024). This research aims to determine the factors that underlie decision-making on ecotourism visits to the Situ Gunung Natural Tourist Park, West Java.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Method of Sampling

Tourists are the objects of this research. Purposive sampling was used in the sampling technique in this research. This sampling technique is limited to adult tourist respondents who have an income. The population here is tourists who are in the Situ Gunung Nature Tourism Park area, so the researchers took samples from the end of the conservation area at the time of observation. The number of respondents was taken using the Slovin formula, namely (Where: n = sample size; N = population size; e = inaccuracy limit) (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016; Sukwika, 2023b):

$$n = \frac{N}{1+Ne^2} \quad n = \frac{251.222}{1+251.222(0.1)^2} \quad n = \frac{251.222}{1+25122.2} \quad n = 99.96 \text{ =100}$$

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.36441/jamr

The increase in the number of visitors to Nature Tourism Parks (NTP) is fluctuating a lot. The average number of visitors in NTP's statistical data from 2014 to 2018 was 176,235. With the Slovin formula, there is an error limit of 10 percent. Based on the calculation above, the number of samples required is 100 people.

2.2. Data Analysis Technique

Data management in this research uses the Partial Least Squares SEM (PLS SEM) program. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is a type of multivariate analysis in social sciences (Ghozali, 2016; Sukwika, 2023a). Multivariate analysis is an application of statistical methods to analyze several research variables simultaneously. The steps in analyzing data are as follows:

1. Outer Model Analysis. Outer model analysis is an analysis used to test construct validity and instrument reliability. Outer model analysis can be seen through the following indicators (Ghozali, 2016; Hair et al., 2018; Sarstedt & Cheah, 2019; Sukwika, 2023a):

a) Convergent Validity is an indicator that is assessed based on the correlation between the item or component score and the construct score, which can be determined from the standardized loading factor. The loading factor describes the magnitude of the correlation between each measurement item (indicator) and the construct. An individual reflection measure is considered high if it correlates > 0.7 with the measured construct.
b) Discriminant Validity is a reflection measurement model of indicators assessed based on the construct's cross-loading with the measurement. If the construct's correlation with the measurement item is more significant than the size of the other construct, it shows that the construct's block size is better than the other blocks. Meanwhile, another method to assess discriminant validity is to compare the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) value.
c) Composite reliability is an indicator for measuring a construct seen in the view of latent variable coefficients. Two measuring tools, internal consistency, and Cronbach's alpha, can be used to evaluate composite reliability. In this measurement, the construct has high reliability if the value achieved is > 0.7.
d) Cronbach's Alpha is a reliability test to strengthen composite reliability. If Cronbach's alpha value is > 0.6, a variable can be declared reliable.

2. Inner Model Analysis. After going through the outer model analysis, the next step is to carry out the inner model analysis. The inner model can be evaluated by looking at the dependent construct's r-square (indicator reliability) and the t-statistic value from path coefficient testing. The path coefficient's value shows the significance level in testing the proposed hypothesis. Furthermore, at the Inner Model Analysis stage, two other analyses were also carried out, namely (Ghozali, 2016; Hair et al., 2018; Sarstedt & Cheah, 2019; Sukwika, 2023a):

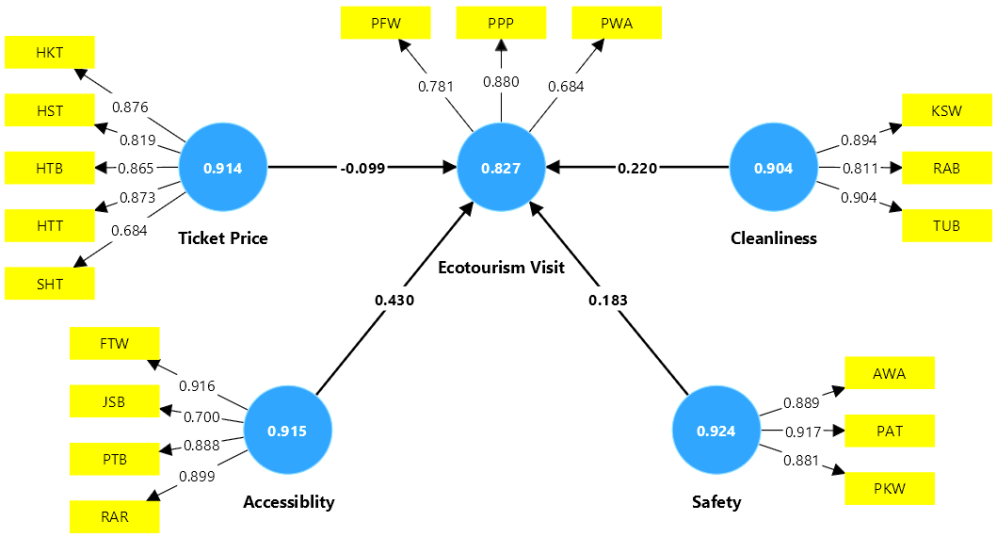
a) Analysis of Variance (R^2) or determination test is carried out to determine the magnitude of the influence of each independent variable on the dependent variable by looking at the r-square value. The higher the r-square value, the better the prediction model from the proposed research. According to Ghozali (2016), the criteria for measuring R^2 are as follows: (1) An R^2 value of 0.75 indicates a strong influence between constructs. (2) The R^2 value of 0.50 indicates moderate influence between constructs. (3) The R^2 value of 0.25 indicates that the influence between constructs is weak.
b) Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) testing was conducted to test multicollinearity and prove the correlation between constructs. According to Ghozali (2016), the criteria for VIF testing are as follows: (1) A VIF value > 5 indicates that there is a multicollinearity problem. (2) A VIF value < 5 indicates no multicollinearity problem.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the PLS-SEM model measurements for the study of decision-making factors in an ecotourism visit in the Situ Gunung Natural Tourism Park West Java found variable discrepancies. Based on the initial

assessment of the SEM model, we can check it by analyzing the measurement or inner model results. One method to assess the adequacy of a measurement model is to verify the factor loading value of each manifest indicator on the associated latent variable. Variables with loading factor values greater than 0.70 are considered valid, indicating convergent validity. Variables whose indicator values are below 0.70 are considered to have a low level of validity. The reason for determining the cut-off limit for loading factor values below 0.70 is that the variables proposed in the measurement have been widely used in previous research.

On the other hand, if the proposed variable is still relatively new, the acceptable cut-off limit for the loading factor value is below 0.50 – 0.60 (Ghozali, 2016; Hair et al., 2018; Sarstedt & Cheah, 2019; Sukwika, 2023a). Therefore, the model will eliminate these variables. Based on the research results in Figure 1, four indicators with correlation values below 0.70 are considered invalid. These indicators are SHT (0.684), JSB (0.700), and PWA (0.684). Therefore, these indicators need to be removed. After eliminating invalid indicators, all variable indicator values exceed 0.70, which confirms their validity. Figure 2 displays the conclusive results of the PLS-SEM model.



Description: *PFW=The facilities at the tourist attractions are good; PPP=The staff service is professional; PWA=NTP Situ Gunung attractions are fun; HKT=Food and drink prices are affordable; HST=Prices for souvenirs and souvenirs are cheap and affordable; HTB= Ticket prices are appropriate; HTT=Ticket prices for other tourist attractions are affordable; SHT=Agree if there is an increase in ticket prices; FTW=Supporting facilities are available; JSB=Footpaths are in good condition; PTB=Parking areas are well organized, RAR: Evacuation routes and operators are available; KSW=Waste is managed properly good; WED=Rest area and prayer room easy to find; TUB=Hygienically clean toilets; AWA=Feel safe in the tourist area; PAT=Directions and warning signs are evident; PKW=Supervising officers are sufficient.*

Figure 1. PLS-SEM Final Result Diagram (*Before Trimming the Loading Factor is Below 0.700*)
Source: Data Processing Results (2023)

Figure 2 shows that all indicators from the model have loading factors above 0.700 so they are acceptable for evaluation. Furthermore, from this figure, we can get:
1. H1. Ticket Price affects Ecotourism Visits of -0.058
2. H2. Cleanliness affects Ecotourism Visits by 0.224
3. H3. Safety affects Ecotourism Visits by 0.180
4. H4. Accessibility affects Ecotourism Visits by 0.464

The initial hypothesis that tests the influence of Ticket Prices on Ecotourism Visits shows a parameter coefficient value of -0.058, indicating an inverse influence of Ticket Prices on Ecotourism Visits. This means that if there is an increase in the ticket price by one rupiah unit, it will reduce interest in visiting NTP Situ Gunung by 5.8%. The price variable influences the decision to visit a tourist attraction. If the price is low, it will have an effect on increasing the decision to visit; conversely, if the price is high, the decision to visit will decrease (Suryani & Wahyu, 2018; Nabila, 2019; Widayati & Widiastuti, 2022; Nurdiana & Santoso, 2023). In the second and third hypotheses, Cleanliness has a positive influence on Ecotourism Visits of 0.224. This

means that if the management of NTP Situ Gunung improves its image through the appearance of Cleanliness by one rupiah, the interest in visiting NTP Situ Gunung will increase by 22.4%. In testing the hypothesis that the effect of Safety on Ecotourism Visits was obtained, a value of 0.180 was obtained. When NTP Situ Gunung managers improve their image through safety programs for tourists, repeat visits will increase by 18%. The tourist attraction must display Cleanliness and safety so that tourists who visit feel comfortable and impressed with the attraction (Sukwika & Kasih, 2020; Sukwika & Rahmatulloh, 2021; Malini et al., 2023). Cleanliness and safety are essential elements in tourism products, as they maintain environmental Cleanliness and a sense of security for tourists at tourist attractions. Providing pleasant and safe tourist services can encourage "interest" in revisiting this tourist spot. Lastly, Accessibility affects Ecotourism Visits by 0.464. Providing accessible and cheap accessibility facilities will positively impact tourists' interest in making return visits by 46.4%. Tourists' decisions to visit a destination are determined more by the time and means of transportation available (Sukwika & Kasih, 2020; Sukwika & Rahmatulloh, 2021; Malini et al., 2023; Monica et al., 2023). Accessibility has a positive and significant effect on interest in visiting tourist attractions (Suryani & Wahyu, 2018; Hapsara & Ahmadi, 2022; Firmansyah, 2023b; Sukwika & Nurwisata, 2024).

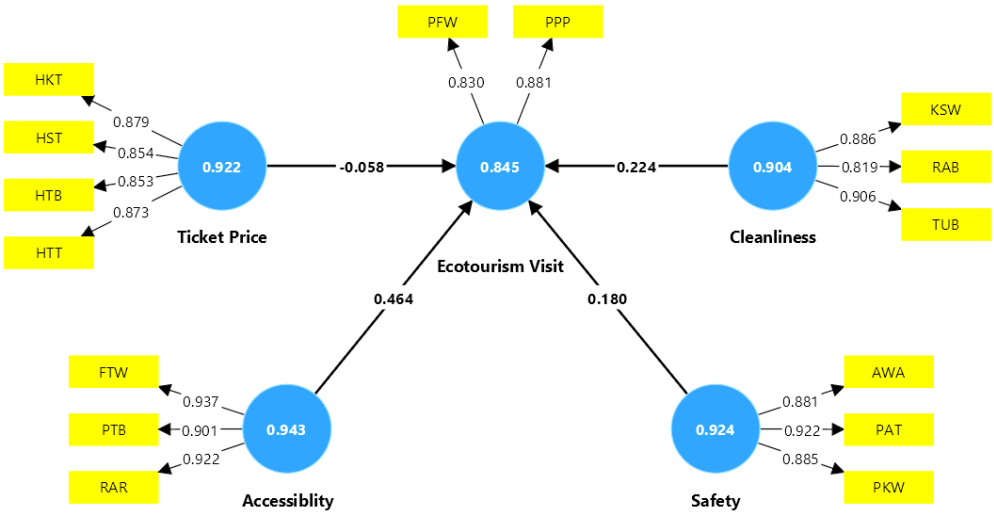


Figure 2. PLS-SEM Final Result Diagram (*After Trimming the Loading Factor is Below 0.700*)
Source: Data Processing Results (2023)

3.1. Reliability and Validity Testing

The Cronbach's alpha value obtained in Table 1 shows that this value has met the reliability criteria, namely that the instrument for each variable has a Cronbach's alpha value above 0.6. These results prove that the measurement tool in this study is reliable for measuring the variables studied. The traditional criterion for internal consistency is Cronbach's alpha, which provides an estimate of reliability based on the intercorrelation of observed indicator variables. Cronbach's alpha assumes that all indicators are equally reliable (i.e., all indicators have the same outer loadings on the construct). However, PLS-SEM prioritizes indicators according to their respective reliability.

Additionally, Cronbach's alpha is sensitive to the number of items in a scale and generally tends to underestimate internal consistency reliability. Thus, it can be used as a more conservative measure of internal consistency reliability. Due to the limitations of Cronbach's alpha, it is more appropriate to apply a different internal consistency reliability measure called composite reliability. After knowing the valid statements, the next step is to calculate the reliability of the construct. Reliability tests are carried out to prove an instrument's accuracy, consistency, and precision in measuring constructs. In carrying out reliability testing using SmartPLS 4.0, it can be seen that the composite reliability value must be greater than 0.7 to be said to be reliable (Ghozali, 2016; Hair et al., 2018; Sarstedt & Cheah, 2019; Sukwika, 2023a).

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.36441/jamr

In SMART-PLS, discriminant validity testing can be assessed based on the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loading. This test is carried out by calculating the correlation between the score of each question item and the total score to obtain a Pearson correlation (r) value (Ghozali, 2016). In the Fornell-Larcker criterion test, discriminant validity can be said to be good if the root of the AVE in the construct is higher than the correlation of the construct with other latent variables. In contrast, the cross-loading test must show a higher indicator value for each construct than the indicators for the other constructs (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

Table 1 shows that the composite reliability value for all variables is more significant than 0.7, and the validity value is good because the AVE value is more than 0.5. It means that all variables meet the requirements and are reliable. On the other hand, if the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value is below <0.50, it can be stated that each variable has poor discriminant validity (Sukwika, 2023a).

Table 1. Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Determination Coefficient (R^2)
Accessiblity	0.909	0.943	0.847	
Cleanliness	0.840	0.904	0.759	
Ecotourism Visit	0.637	0.845	0.733	0.621
Safety	0.878	0.924	0.803	
Ticket Price	0.888	0.922	0.748	

Source: Data Processing Results (2023)

As seen in Table 1, Cronbach's alpha for the variables Accessibility, Cleanliness, Ecotourism Visit, Safety, and Ticket Price are 0.909, 0.840, 0.637, 0.878, and 0.888 respectively. The Cronbach's alpha value is > 0.6, meaning that all measured variables can be declared reliable. At the same time, as shown in Table 1, the composite reliability value for all variables is more significant than 0.7, namely in the range of 0.845 – 0.943. The AVE values are as follows: Accessibility 0.847, Cleanliness 0.759, Ecotourism Visit 0.733, Safety 0.803, and Ticket Price 0.748. All variables meet the evaluation criteria because the AVE coefficient is more than 0.50. In addition, the R-square value obtained by the model can be used to monitor the results of structural or inner model testing. The R-square value is 0.621, meaning that 62.1% of the variability in the consumption behavior construct is caused by variability in Accessibility, Cleanliness, Ecotourism Visit, Safety, and Ticket Price. Other variables not included in the model accounted for the remaining 37.9%.

Table 2 shows that the numbers on the diagonal are the roots of AVE, and the other numbers are the correlation coefficients between variables. The condition for this construct to have good discriminant validity is that the AVE root value must be greater than the correlation coefficient. In the discriminant validity table, Fornell-Lacker criterion, all values for the Accessibility (0.920), Cleanliness (0.871), Ecotourism Visit (0.856), Safety (0.896), and Ticket Price (0.865) variables are more significant than the correlation coefficient. Because all correlation coefficient numbers are smaller than the root value of AVE, it can be concluded that everything developed in the model has good discriminant validity (Ghozali, 2016; Sukwika, 2023a).

Table 2. Discriminant Validity – Fornell-Lacker Criterion

	Accessiblity	Cleanliness	Ecotourism Visit	Safety	Ticket Price
Accessiblity	**0.920**				
Cleanliness	0.912	**0.871**			
Ecotourism Visit	0.764	0.752	**0.856**		
Safety	0.649	0.659	0.615	**0.896**	
Ticket Price	0.369	0.234	0.208	0.236	**0.865**

Source: Data Processing Results (2023)

To determine whether Multicollinearity exists in the regression model, we can determine the variance inflation factor (VIF) value. The Multicollinearity Test aims to determine whether a high or perfect correlation is found between the independent variables in a regression model. Testing can be done by looking at the VIF in the regression model. The decision-making criteria regarding the multicollinearity test are as follows (Ghozali, 2016; Sukwika, 2023a): (1) If the VIF value is < 10, then it is stated that Multicollinearity does not occur. (2) If the VIF value is > 10, then Multicollinearity is declared to have occurred. If symptoms of Multicollinearity

occur, several alternative ways to overcome multicollinearity problems are as follows (Ghozali, 2016): (1) Replace or remove variables with a high correlation. (2) Increase the number of observations. (3) Data can be transformed into other forms, such as natural logarithms, square roots, or first difference delta.

Table 3. Collinearity statistics (VIF) – Outer model and Inner model

Collinearity statistics (VIF) – Outer model

Manifest	VIF	Manifest	VIF
AWA	2.181	PFW	1.280
FTW	3.757	PKW	2.457
HKT	2.552	PPP	1.280
HST	2.045	PTB	2.553
HTB	2.596	RAB	1.694
HTT	2.718	RAR	3.348
KSW	2.233	TUB	2.447
PAT	2.739		

Collinearity statistics (VIF) – Inner model

Latent	VIF
Accessiblity -> Ecotourism Visit	7.162
Cleanliness -> Ecotourism Visit	6.771
Safety -> Ecotourism Visit	1.816
Ticket Price -> Ecotourism Visit	1.254

Source: Data Processing Results (2023)

In Table 3, it is known that the Collinearity statistics values in both the Outer model (VIF range= 1,280 – 3,348) and Inner model (VIF range= 1,254 – 7,162) did not find any symptoms of Multicollinearity. This condition is indicated by the VIF values for each manifest and latent variable, all below 10 (Ghozali, 2016; Sukwika, 2023a). The results of hypothesis testing, which examines the influence of Accessibility, Cleanliness, Safety, and Ticket Price on Ecotourism Visits between manifests, are presented in Table 4. Overall, the p-value was less than 0.05, indicating that the proposed manifest has a significant impact. At the same time, the T-statistic value also shows a value greater than 1.96. This means that the research hypothesis that was created can be accepted.

Table 4. Outer loading – Mean, STDEV, T value, p values

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|) (>1,96)	P values (<0,05)	Decision
AWA <- Safety	0.881	0.879	0.044	19.961	0.000	Valid
FTW <- Accessiblity	0.937	0.927	0.112	8.332	0.000	Valid
HKT <- Ticket Price	0.879	0.769	0.296	2.968	0.003	Valid
HST <- Ticket Price	0.854	0.743	0.311	2.742	0.006	Valid
HTB <- Ticket Price	0.853	0.765	0.290	2.938	0.003	Valid
HTT <- Ticket Price	0.873	0.780	0.291	2.999	0.003	Valid
KSW <- Cleanliness	0.886	0.881	0.089	9.949	0.000	Valid
PAT <- Safety	0.922	0.922	0.020	45.218	0.000	Valid
PFW <- Ecotourism Visit	0.830	0.803	0.167	4.982	0.000	Valid
PKW <- Safety	0.885	0.880	0.039	22.598	0.000	Valid
PPP <- Ecotourism Visit	0.881	0.878	0.106	8.317	0.000	Valid
PTB <- Accessiblity	0.901	0.884	0.122	7.390	0.000	Valid
RAB <- Cleanliness	0.819	0.801	0.107	7.678	0.000	Valid
RAR <- Accessiblity	0.922	0.908	0.117	7.903	0.000	Valid
TUB <- Cleanliness	0.906	0.892	0.099	9.110	0.000	Valid

Source: Data Processing Results (2023)

4. CONCLUSION

The decision to make an ecotourism visit at the Situ Gunung Nature Tourism Park (NTP), West Java, is determined by the ticket price factor, which shows that the increase in ticket prices slightly reduces interest in

visiting. On the other hand, cleanliness has a positive influence with a coefficient of 0.224, indicating that good hygiene conditions can increase visits. The safety factor also shows a positive influence, indicating that feeling safe during a visit is essential for visitors. Finally, the accessibility factor has the most significant influence, which means that ease of access is the main factor in attracting visitors. The policy implication of the results of this research is that the Situ Gunung NTP management needs to focus on increasing accessibility to attract more visitors. This can be done by improving road infrastructure, adding transportation facilities, and providing clear directions. In addition, maintaining environmental cleanliness must be a priority by increasing the frequency of cleaning areas and providing adequate cleaning facilities. anagers need to ensure adequate security officers and an effective monitoring system to provide visitors with a sense of security. Even though the impact on ticket prices is relatively small, managers must consider pricing strategies that are competitive and in line with visitors' purchasing power and offer special packages or discounts to attract interest in visits. By implementing these policies, ecotourism visits at Situ Gunung NTP will increase, which can support sustainable conservation and local economic development.

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