

The Effect of Destination Image on Trust with Satisfaction as a Mediating Variable (a Study of the Tourist Village of Aengtongtong)

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ARTICLE INFO

Date of entry:
30 Oct 2025
Revision Date:
20 November 2025
Date Received:
01 December 2025

ABSTRACT

This research examines how destination image influences tourist trust, with satisfaction serving as a mediating variable in the Aengtongtong Keris Tourist Village. The study addresses inconsistencies in prior research regarding both the direct and indirect effects of destination image on trust, especially within culturally based tourist villages. The objective is to determine whether destination image affects trust directly or operates through satisfaction. Using a quantitative method and purposive sampling, data were collected from 96 respondents and analyzed using PLS-SEM. The finding revealed that destination image significantly influences satisfaction but does not directly affect trust. Satisfaction is significant and positively influences trust, serving as an effective mediator between destination image and trust. These results show that a favorable destination image must be accompanied by satisfying tourist experiences to foster trust. Theoretically, this research enriches the understanding of trust formation mechanisms in village tourism, while, practically, offering managers insights to enhance service quality. This study is limited to one tourist village and relies on self-reported data, suggesting opportunities for broader future research.

Keywords: Destination Image, Satisfaction, Trust, Tourist Village, Mediation.



Cite this as: Fauziyah, N. L., & AS, F. (2025). The Effect of Destination Image on Trust with Satisfaction as a Mediating Variable (a Study of the Tourist Village of Aengtongtong). *Jurnal Ilmu Manajemen Advantage*, 9(2), 274–284. <https://doi.org/10.30741/adv.v9i2.1805>

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a strategic sector for the Indonesian economy, with its contribution to GDP continuing to increase in recent years, from 3.72% in 2022 to 3.9% in 2023, and is expected to reach 4% in 2024. Foreign exchange earnings also grew significantly, reaching US\$16.71 billion in 2024, up from US\$14 billion in 2023 (Kemenpar, 2025). This confirms tourism's role as an economic driver, job creator, and infrastructure promoter, underscoring the need for sustainable tourism development as a national priority. Indonesia offers a variety of potential destinations across the archipelago, each with its own unique appeal. The beauty of its landscapes, rich culture, and abundant historical heritage give Indonesia a strategic position in the global tourism market (Fatmah et al., 2024). The government, through the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, is encouraging the development of tourism villages, aiming to reach 6,026 by 2024, with East Java the province with the most (GoodStats, 2024). One region with great potential is Sumenep Regency on Madura Island, comprising 27 subdistricts and 126 islands and offering a variety of natural and cultural attractions (Chrismardani & Arief, 2022). Sumenep won an award for innovation in tourism village

development in 2023. One of its highlights is the Keris Aengtongtong Tourism Village in Saronggi District, known for its tradition of keris-making as an intangible cultural heritage. This unique culture strengthens the destination's image, attracts tourists, and serves as an example of sustainable cultural tourism development practices that can be replicated by other villages (Misriyani & Yuliastina, 2025).

Destination image is one of the important factors that influence tourist interest, as it is a mental representation that shapes expectations and visit decisions. A positive image arises from tourists' perceptions, shaped by direct experiences and indirect information such as social media, official promotions, and recommendations. In the digital age, the rapid dissemination of information makes it easier for destination images to form and influence public perception. Destinations with weak images tend to be abandoned by tourists (Rahmadani et al., 2025). Therefore, Aengtongtong Tourism Village needs to strengthen its image to become better known and more attractive. Previous research shows that the image of a tourist destination influences tourist trust and satisfaction (Çoban, 2012; Jebbouri et al., 2022; Mardani et al., 2024), including the finding that satisfaction can mediate this effect.

Based on the literature review, several research gaps remain concerning the connections among destination image, tourist trust, and satisfaction. (Jebbouri et al., 2022) Indicated that destination image influences trust when satisfaction functions as a mediating factor. However, Suryaningsih (2020) focuses only on customer experience and destination image, without examining the mediating role of satisfaction in the context of tourist villages. Furthermore, Wantara et al. (2024) investigated how destination image and accessibility affect revisit intention. However, they did not incorporate satisfaction as a mediating variable, while Jimenez-Garcia et al. (2025) centered on happiness as the mediating variable and did not explore village-based destinations. Unlike modern tourist destinations, Keris Aengtongtong Tourism Village has a strong cultural character, where the destination's image is shaped not only by tourist facilities but also by cultural practices such as keris-making, the community's role, and interactions between tourists and the community. These characteristics have not been the primary focus of previous studies, most of which have examined the image of destinations in urban or commercial tourist destinations. This gap shows that research examining the influence of destination image on trust, with satisfaction as a mediator, particularly within tourism villages with socio-cultural characteristics distinct from those of general destinations, remains scarce. This study appears to address this gap by examining how the goal image influences tourist trust via satisfaction. The results of this study are expected to provide input for village managers to develop more effective promotional strategies, as well as serve as a reference for further research on village-based tourism to support the development of sustainable tourism theory and practice in Indonesia.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

This research seeks to explain how tourist trust is shaped by destination image, with satisfaction acting as a mediating factor. The conceptual framework consists of four key relationships among the variables. First, the study investigates the influence of destination image on tourist trust. Second, it evaluates how the destination image contributes to tourist satisfaction. Third, it examines satisfaction as a mediating factor linking destination image to trust. This set of relationships is grounded in findings from previous studies that consistently highlight the interconnectedness of these variables in shaping tourist behavior, thereby offering a solid theoretical foundation for the model proposed in this research. Several studies have found that destination image positively influences trust (Aprilia et al., 2019; Mardani et al., 2024). Moreover, various studies indicate that destination image also positively influences tourist satisfaction (Rahmadani et al., 2025). In addition, earlier research demonstrates that satisfaction can positively influence tourist trust (Prakoso et al., 2020). Additionally, satisfaction functions as an intermediary linking destination image to trust. (Jebbouri et al., 2022). The conceptual framework of this study is organized as follows, drawing from the previously stated literature review:

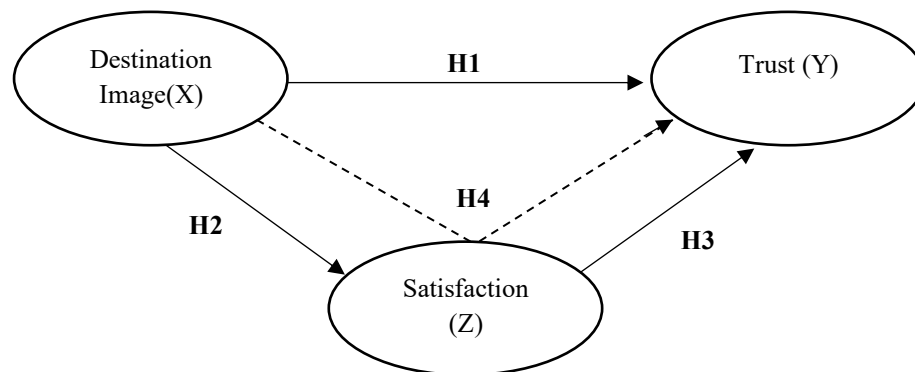


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Source: processed data

Hypothesis:

H1: Destination image has a positive and significant effect on trust.

H2: Destination image has a positive and significant effect on satisfaction.

H3: Satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on trust.

H4: Destination image has a positive and significant effect on trust through satisfaction as a mediating variable.

METHODS

This study examines how the image of a place affects visitors' trust, using quantitative and qualitative data. It uses satisfaction as a connecting thread across the study's different parts. The study area is Keris Aengtongtong Tourism Village in Saronggi District, Sumenep Regency. The research population consists of all tourists who have visited Keris Aengtongtong Tourism Village. The study used purposive sampling to select participants. To decide how many people to include, they used the Cochran formula and found that at least 96 people were needed.

$$N = \frac{z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

Explanation:

N = Number of samples required

Z = Value in the normal curve for a 5% margin of error, with a value of 1.96

P = Probability of being correct 50% = 0.5

q = Probability of being incorrect 50% = 0.5

e = Sampling error rate, 10%

$$N = \frac{1,96^2 (0,5)(0,5)}{(0,1)^2}$$

$$N = \frac{0,9604}{0,01}$$

$$N = 96,04$$

A 1–5 scale questionnaire was used to collect information directly from people. The data were then analyzed using PLS-SEM with SmartPLS. Testing the model had two parts. First, they checked the Measurement Model to ensure the questions worked well by examining factor loadings, AVEs (which should be greater than 0.5), cross-loadings, HTMT, composite reliability, and Cronbach's alpha (which should be greater than 0.7). Then, they examined the Structural Model to see how the different parts are connected, checking path coefficients and R2 values to understand the strength of the effects, both direct and indirect via satisfaction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study employed Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze the relationships among variables in the research model, using SmartPLS 4.

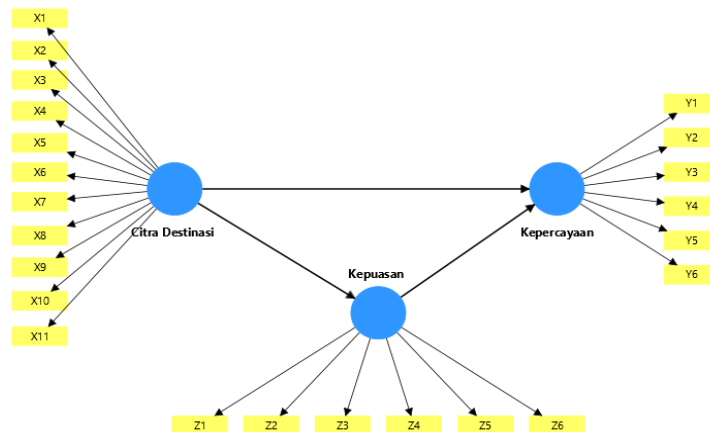


Figure 2. SEM PLS Model

Source: processed data PLS SEM

Measurement Model

The Outer Model is employed to evaluate the link between latent variables and indicators, ensuring that instruments used measure the constructs accurately and consistently. This stage focuses on testing validity and reliability before analyzing relationships among variables in the inner model. The primary assessments conducted in the outer model include discriminant validity, convergent validity, and construct reliability.

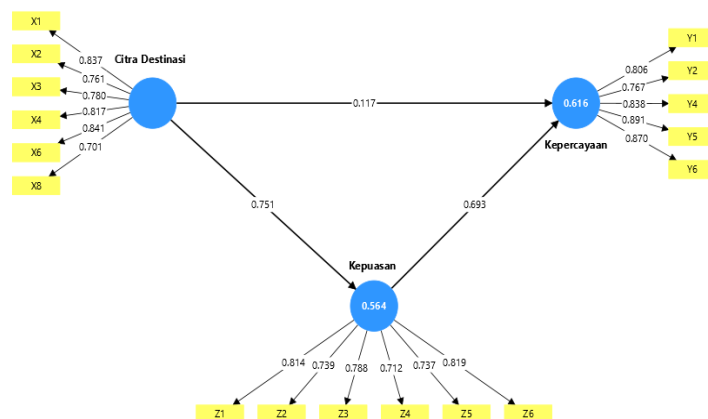


Figure 3. Outer Model

Source: processed data

Convergent Validity

There are two evaluable criteria for convergent validity: an outer loading factor value that is deemed valid if it is greater than >0.7 , and an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value greater than >0.5 (Rahadi, 2023).

Table 1. Outer Loading

	Destination Image	Trust	Satisfaction	Description
X1	0.837			Valid
X2	0.761			Valid
X3	0.780			Valid
X4	0.817			Valid
X6	0.841			Valid
X8	0.701			Valid
Y1		0.806		Valid
Y2		0.767		Valid
Y4		0.838		Valid
Y5		0.891		Valid
Y6		0.870		Valid
Z1			0.814	Valid
Z2			0.739	Valid
Z3			0.788	Valid
Z4			0.712	Valid
Z5			0.737	Valid
Z6			0.819	Valid

Source: processed data

According to Table 1, the convergent validity test results indicate that all indicators have outer loadings > 0.7. As a result, every indicator can be said to satisfy the requirements for validity.

Table 2. AVE

Variabel	Average variance extracted	Description
Citra Destinasi	0.626	Valid
Kepercayaan	0.698	Valid
Kepuasan	0.592	Valid

Source: processed data

Based on the convergent validity test results, as indicated by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values in the table, all variables are considered valid, as each AVE exceeds the minimum required threshold of 0.50.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity aims to ensure that each latent variable truly differs from the others and uniquely explains the phenomenon being studied. In this study, cross-loadings and HTMT values were used to measure it. If an indicator's loading value on the measured construct is higher than its loading value on other constructs, it is deemed to have discriminant validity. HTMT was chosen because it provides more accurate estimates of the correlation between variables. The recommended HTMT threshold is < 0.90. (Sarstedt et al., 2021).

Table 3. Cross Loading

	Destination Image	Trust	Satisfaction	Description
X1	0.837	0.673	0.671	Valid
X2	0.761	0.488	0.565	Valid
X3	0.780	0.481	0.553	Valid
X4	0.817	0.508	0.596	Valid
X6	0.814	0.444	0.621	Valid
X8	0.701	0.384	0.544	Valid
Y1	0.623	0.806	0.694	Valid
Y2	0.569	0.767	0.607	Valid
Y4	0.502	0.838	0.653	Valid
Y5	0.488	0.891	0.671	Valid
Y6	0.472	0.870	0.627	Valid
Z1	0.626	0.573	0.814	Valid
Z2	0.578	0.594	0.739	Valid
Z3	0.521	0.603	0.788	Valid
Z4	0.585	0.446	0.712	Valid
Z5	0.557	0.596	0.737	Valid
Z6	0.601	0.755	0.819	Valid

Source: processed data

Based on discriminant validity testing using cross-loadings, all indicators in the Destination Image, Trust, and Satisfaction variables showed higher correlations with their original constructs than with other constructs.

Table 3. HTMT

	Destination Image	Trust	Satisfaction
Destination Image			
Trust	0.707		
Satisfaction	0.861	0.881	

Source: processed data

In the table, HTMT yielded values <0.90 for the variable pairs. This indicates that the variable has reliable discriminant validity.

Reliability

Reliability testing is conducted to evaluate the internal consistency of indicators in measuring the intended construct. A construct is deemed reliable when its Composite Reliability (CR) exceeds >0.70(Rahadi, 2023). In this research, reliability was assessed using two methods: Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha. The outcomes obtained from both measurements are presented below.

Table 4. Uji Reliabilitas

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Description
Destination Image	0.880	0.888	Reliabel
Trust	0.891	0.892	Reliabel
Satisfaction	0.861	0.866	Reliabel

Source: processed data

The analysis indicates that the research instrument exhibits high reliability, with all Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values surpassing the 0.70 benchmark.

Structural Model

This test was conducted to assess the relationship between constructs or variables in the research model and to identify the extent to which independent variables influence dependent variables.

R-Square

The coefficient of determination ranges from 0 to 1. Typically, an R² value of 0.75 indicates a strong model, 0.50 a moderate model, and 0.25 a weak model (Rahadi, 2023).

Table 4. R-Square

Variabel	R-square	R-square adjusted
Trust (Y)	0.616	0.607
Satisfaction (Z)	0.564	0.560

Source: processed data

The R-Square value reflects the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that the model explains. The Trust (Y) variable shows an R-Square of 0.616, indicating that the model accounts for 61.6% of its variation. In comparison, the remaining 38.4% is attributed to factors outside the model. Similarly, the Satisfaction (Z) variable shows an R-Square of 0.564, indicating that 56.4% of its variation is explained by the model, with 43.6% attributed to other factors. Overall, these R-square values indicate that the model provides a reasonably strong explanation of both Trust and Satisfaction.

Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis testing using p-values was conducted to assess the significance of path coefficients (β) at the 0.05 significance level, using a one-tailed approach to test for positive direction. A hypothesis is considered supported when the p-value is ≤ 0.05 and rejected when it exceeds 0.05. In PLS-SEM, direct effects are shown through path coefficients; values approaching +1 indicate a strong positive association, and those approaching -1 indicate a strong negative association. The hypothesis test results are presented in terms of direct, indirect, and total effects.

Direct Effects

Table 4. Direct Effects

	Original sample (O)	P Values
Citra Destinasi -> Kepercayaan	0.117	0.174
Citra Destinasi -> Kepuasan	0.751	0.000
Kepuasan -> Kepercayaan	0.693	0.000

Source: processed data

The test results indicate a relationship between Destination Image and trust, with a positive path coefficient of 0.11; however, it is not statistically significant because the p-value of 0.174 is greater than 0.05. Conversely, the effect of Destination Image on Satisfaction is both positive and significant, with a coefficient of 0.751 and a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$. The relationship between Satisfaction and Trust is likewise significant, indicated by a coefficient of 0.693 and a p-value of 0.000. Thus, Destination Image has a meaningful impact on Satisfaction, and Satisfaction meaningfully affects Trust, while the direct influence of Destination Image on Trust is not significant.

Indirect Effects

Indirect effects in mediation models describe the magnitude of the influence of variable X on variable Y that occurs via a mediator variable.

Table 4. Indirect Effects

	Original sample (O)	P values
Citra Destinasi -> Kepuasan -> Kepercayaan	0.520	0.000

Source: processed data

Indirect effects describe the influence of variable X on Y through the role of a mediator variable. The analysis shows that Satisfaction plays a significant role in connecting Destination Image and Trust, as seen by the p-value of 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 level. The magnitude of the indirect effect, which is 0.520, indicates that an increase in Destination Image can increase Trust through Satisfaction by 52%. Thus, the mediation that occurs is positive and significant.

The Effect of Destination Image on Trust

The results of this study indicate that destination image has a positive but insignificant effect on trust. This is evidenced by a P-value of $0.174 < 0.05$ and an original sample value of 0.117, meaning that the hypothesis is rejected. These findings indicate that tourists' positive perceptions of destination image do not necessarily directly shape their trust. This means that even though tourists have a good view of a destination's attractiveness, reputation, or character, this does not automatically give them complete confidence in it. Trust is not formed solely through image, but instead requires direct experience or real evaluation felt during the trip. Thus, destination image can attract interest and create positive perceptions, but it is not necessarily enough to foster trust without a satisfying real experience.

These results align with the research by Jebbouri et al. (2022), which found that destination image does not have a direct impact on trust, but rather that this influence emerges only when tourists first experience satisfaction during their visit. This means that an image can indeed spark initial interest, but trust is formed after tourists have had a positive experience that meets or exceeds their expectations.

The Effect of Destination Image on Satisfaction

The results of this study indicate that destination image has a significant positive effect on satisfaction. This is evidenced by a p-value of $0.000 > 0.05$, so that the relationship tested is declared significant and the hypothesis is accepted. In addition, the original sample value of 0.751 indicates that the better the destination image perceived by tourists, the higher their level of satisfaction will be. Thus, improvements in destination image elements, such as the uniqueness of attractions, facilities, services, accessibility, and memorable experiences, significantly increase tourist satisfaction during their visit.

This finding aligns with the research (Fahmi et al., 2022), which indicates that destination image has a significant positive effect on satisfaction. This finding is also reinforced by research (Mardani et

al., 2024), which shows that destination image has a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction.

The Effect of Satisfaction on Trust

The results of this study indicate that satisfaction has a significant positive effect on trust. This is evidenced by a p-value of 0.000 and an original sample value of 0.693. This means that the higher tourists' satisfaction with their travel experience, the greater their trust in the destination. Satisfaction provides an emotional and psychological foundation for shaping tourist trust. When tourists are satisfied with various aspects of their travel experience, such as service, facilities, cleanliness, safety, the atmosphere of the environment, and the match between expectations and reality, these positive evaluations encourage the belief that the destination is capable of providing a consistent and reliable experience. This study aligns with previous research by Suryaningsih (2020), which shows that satisfaction has a significant positive effect on trust.

The Effect of Destination Image through Satisfaction on Trust

The results of this study indicate that destination image has a significant positive effect on trust through satisfaction. This is evidenced by a p-value of 0.000 and an original sample value of 0.520; thus, the hypothesis is accepted. This means that the destination image can indirectly increase tourist trust by boosting satisfaction. A good destination image, for example, positive perceptions of the uniqueness of tourist attractions, cleanliness, safety, community friendliness, complete facilities, and ease of access, can create a satisfying tourist experience for tourists. When tourists are satisfied with their travel experience, these positive feelings encourage stronger trust in the destination, such as the belief that it can provide an optimal experience, meet expectations, and be worth revisiting or recommending to others. These findings also show that satisfaction serves as an intermediary variable linking destination image to trust. This means that a good destination image alone is not enough to directly build trust if a satisfying experience does not accompany it. Tourists will only trust a destination when their positive perceptions of the destination match their actual experiences. In other words, a strong destination image can increase tourist trust, but this influence works through increased satisfaction.

This finding aligns with research (Suryaningsih, 2020), which states that intervening variables can mediate the influence of exogenous variables on endogenous variables; specifically, satisfaction variables can mediate the effects of tourist experience and destination image variables on trust. This finding is also reinforced by research (Jebbouri et al., 2022), which states that satisfaction significantly and positively acts as a mediator between destination image and trust.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that destination image does not have a direct and significant impact on tourist trust. This implies that tourists' initial impressions of a destination's quality and attractiveness alone are not enough to build trust without a satisfying experience during their visit. Nonetheless, destination image is found to significantly and positively affect satisfaction, indicating that favorable views of a destination's various attributes can enhance tourists' overall experience. Satisfaction is also proven to significantly influence trust, suggesting that experiences that meet or surpass expectations are crucial in fostering tourist trust. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that satisfaction serves as an important mediator between destination image and trust. Therefore, building a strong destination image must be accompanied by delivering a satisfying tourism experience to strengthen tourist trust effectively. These findings provide theoretical insights into how trust is formed within the setting of tourism villages and offer practical guidance for destination managers to focus on enhancing the quality of tourist experiences as a strategy to improve trust and support sustainable tourism development. This study has important implications for tourism development, especially in culture-based destinations such as Keris Aengtongtong Tourism Village. Theoretically, this study enriches academic research on the relationship between destination image, satisfaction, and trust in the context of village-based tourism. The findings confirm that destination image does

not directly shape trust, but rather through satisfaction as a mediator. In practice, for the managers of Aengtongtong Tourism Village, the research results provide direction for developing destination marketing strategies grounded in tourism experiences. Strengthening the destination image must be accompanied by improving the quality of tourism services to create satisfaction and ultimately build trust and the potential for repeat visits. This effort is important to support the sustainability of village tourism.

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