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BETWEEN SEA, SAND, AND SELF: A STRUCTURAL MODEL OF TOURIST INTENTION IN PARANGTRITIS COASTAL TOURISM

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Abstract

Introduction. Although coastal tourism continues to attract scholarly interest, studies on consumer behaviour in sand dune coastal settings – particularly those that integrate self-congruence, destination personality, destination image, and novelty seeking – remain notably limited. This study addresses this gap by developing a structural model that explores the psychological and perceptual drivers of visit intention in Parangtritis Sand Dunes, a symbolically sacred and environmentally sensitive destination on the southern coast of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Rooted in self-congruence theory and destination branding literature, the study incorporates six key constructs: destination personality, self-congruence, novelty seeking, perceived value, destination image, and visit intention. **Material and methods.** Data were collected from 246 valid respondents aged 17 and above who were aware of the site's existence. A convenience sampling approach was employed using both personal outreach and WhatsApp distribution. All constructs were measured on a six-point Likert scale. Analytical procedures included exploratory factor analysis, AVE, reliability testing, and hypothesis testing using structural equation modelling. **Results.** Self-congruence significantly influenced destination image, perceived value, and visit intention. Destination personality impacted destination image, and perceived value strongly affected visit intention. However, novelty seeking and destination image did not significantly influence perceived value and visit intention, respectively. These findings suggest that emotional alignment and symbolic resonance with the destination – more than thrill-seeking impulses – drive responsible tourist behaviour. **Conclusions.** This study contributes to the discourse on sustainable tourism by emphasizing the importance of internal psychological alignment and identity-based branding in fostering meaningful and sustainable engagement with culturally and ecologically fragile coastal destinations.

Keywords: consumer behaviour, destination marketing, sustainable marketing, sand dunes, coastal tourism

Introduction

Dunes coastal tourism refers to a form of nature-based tourism focused on coastal sand dune ecosystems – dynamic landforms shaped by wind, marine, and fluvial processes. These environments are ecologically valuable and geologically rare, often supporting biodiversity, preventing erosion, and serving as appealing sites for recreation and geotourism [1, 2]. While beach and coastal tourism have received substantial scholarly attention, consumer behaviour specifically related to dunes coastal tourism remains underexplored. Most research has focused on environmental impacts, land-use changes, and conservation, with limited emphasis on the symbolic or psychological drivers of tourist behaviour in dune settings.

Recent developments in tourism behaviour studies have introduced constructs such as self-congruence, destination personality, and novelty seeking to explain visit intention. However, these predictors have mostly been examined in urban, cultural, or heritage tourism contexts [3, 4, 5]. Their application in fragile, geologically significant coastal dune environments – particularly in Southeast Asia – remains scarce. This lack of behavioural insight limits the development of strategic, identity-

based tourism marketing that is essential for sustainable destination management.

One such under-researched location is the Parangtritis Sand Dunes, located in Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. This site comprises the only active tropical barchan dune system in Southeast Asia and serves both ecological and cultural functions. However, its integrity is threatened by rapid land-use changes, including residential expansion, aquaculture, and tourism infrastructure, which have reduced open dune areas from 456 hectares in 1974 to just 41 hectares in 2013 [6]. Tourism activities such as off-road jeep rides, sandboarding, and decorative flower parks have encroached on conservation zones, disrupting natural aeolian processes vital for dune regeneration [7]. In addition, overlapping regulatory authorities and limited stakeholder coordination have contributed to inconsistent enforcement of conservation zoning and weak community-based governance [8].

Given these challenges, this study aims to investigate the behavioural antecedents of visit intention in the context of Parangtritis dunes coastal tourism. More specifically, it seeks to examine how tourists' perceptions of destination personality, their psychological alignment with the destination (self-congruence), and their desire for novelty shape their perceived value and des-

tionation image, which in turn influence their intention to visit. By developing and empirically testing a structural model involving these variables, the study contributes to closing the gap in consumer behaviour research in coastal dune tourism and offers strategic insights for promoting environmentally and culturally sustainable tourism engagement.

Destination Personality

Destination personality refers to the set of human-like traits attributed to a tourism destination, enabling tourists to perceive places in ways similar to how they perceive people. This conceptualization allows destinations to develop unique emotional and symbolic identities that resonate with visitors. According to Suhud et al. [9], destination personality reflects psychological elements such as sincerity, excitement, competence, and sophistication, which influence tourist attachment and visit intention, especially in niche tourism contexts. Yang et al. [10] link destination personality to Aaker's brand personality framework, noting that these anthropomorphic qualities can affect tourists' affective evaluations and behavioural outcomes such as satisfaction and loyalty. Türktarhan and Kozak [11] emphasize that destination personality serves as a mechanism through which tourists internalize their emotional experiences and construct personalized meanings of a place. Additionally, Zulfiqar et al. [12] demonstrate that honesty, friendliness, and excitement are key differentiators among competing destinations, enhancing destination image and preference. The accumulation of these findings suggests that destination personality not only supports functional benefits but also fulfils symbolic and experiential needs of tourists. In the context of coastal tourism, particularly destinations with strong visual and cultural identities such as Parangtritis Beach, destination personality becomes crucial in shaping favourable impressions, emotional connection, and sustainable visit intentions through self-congruent imagery and affective resonance.

Destination Personality and Destination Image

In the domain of tourism marketing, destination personality refers to the set of human characteristics associated with a destination, often influenced by the physical, cultural, and symbolic attributes of the place. When tourists perceive a destination as having distinct personality traits – such as sophistication, sincerity, or excitement – they form deeper emotional associations with it. These perceived traits shape not only the emotional connection tourists build with the destination but also influence the formation of its image in their minds. Ajanovic et al. [13] and Matzler et al. [14] emphasize that a positive destination personality can significantly influence how the overall image of a destination is constructed by tourists. The stronger and more favourable the perceived personality traits, the more positively the image of the destination is perceived. This relationship is particularly important in unique tourism contexts, such as coastal or heritage destinations, where symbolic and affective associations are prominent in visitor evaluations. Therefore, exploring the influence of destination personality on destination image is essential for enhancing the branding strategy of culturally distinctive sites such as Parangtritis Beach in Yogyakarta.

Given this conceptual foundation, this study proposes that the perceived personality traits of a destination significantly shape the cognitive and affective image tourists form about that place.

H1: Destination personality has a significant positive effect on destination image.

Self-Congruence

Self-congruence refers to the degree of alignment between an individual's self-concept and the perceived image of a product, brand, or destination. This psychological congruence plays a critical role in shaping consumer preferences, emotional attachment, and behavioural intention. Mandal [15] asserts that consumers are more likely to favor brands or places that align with their self-image, leading to positive attitudes and brand preference. This theory is further supported by Nødtvedt et al. [16], who found that lower self-congruence between tourists and Airbnb hosts negatively impacted tourists' willingness to pay, trust, and revisit intention. Ebrahimi et al. [17] emphasized the importance of ideal self-congruence, noting that emotional attachment and brand loyalty are higher when a destination reflects consumers' aspirational self-image. In tourism contexts, Kumar and Nayak [18] demonstrate that self-congruity, combined with functional congruity, significantly influences tourists' post-visit behaviours, including revisit intention and word-of-mouth recommendations. Moreover, Shahabi et al. [19] explain that the alignment between destination image and the tourist's self-concept is crucial for generating satisfaction and revisit intention. This perspective is echoed by Meeprom and Fakfare [20], who found that both actual and ideal self-congruence increase visitor engagement in cultural events. Thus, self-congruence emerges as a foundational concept in understanding how tourists internalize destination identities and form affective bonds that drive sustainable tourism behaviour.

Self-Congruence and Destination Image

Self-congruence indicates the degree of alignment between tourists' self-concept and their perception of a destination. When this alignment is high, individuals are more likely to form emotionally meaningful and favourable images of the destination. Guo et al. [4] found that self-congruence plays a pivotal role in shaping destination image, particularly when destination advertising matches the self-identity of the traveller, enhancing emotional connection and image evaluation. Similarly, Anggarawati and Saputra [21] demonstrated that when tourists perceive a destination as consistent with their personal values or social identity, they develop more positive cognitive and affective impressions. Wen and Huang [22] confirmed this even in contexts with controversial destinations, suggesting that congruence can buffer against negative perceptions. These findings are in line with the symbolic interactionist view that individuals seek to visit destinations that reflect their ideal or actual self-image, thereby enhancing place attachment and long-term loyalty.

Building upon this theoretical foundation, it is posited that when tourists experience self-congruence with a destination – meaning the place reflects their identity – they are more inclined to perceive the destination in a favourable and emotionally resonant way.

H2: Self-congruence has a significant positive effect on destination image.

Self-Congruence and Visit Intention

Self-congruence is a psychological mechanism where tourists perceive a strong match between their self-concept and the personality or symbolic attributes of a destination. This congruence fosters emotional connections and enhances motivational states that drive visit intentions. Kumar and Nayak [18] emphasize that self-congruity plays a key role in influencing tourists' post-visit behaviours, including loyalty and revisit intention. Moreover, findings from Guo et al. [4] and Xu et al. [23] reinforce that when tourists recognize a destination as reflecting

their self-image, the alignment activates meaningful behavioural responses, such as desire to visit, recommend, or revisit. Li and Lai [24] add that self-congruity influences satisfaction and the emotional attachment to the destination, which are critical precursors to visit intention. These effects are especially pronounced in tourism contexts where identity expression, such as through natural, cultural, or symbolic attributes like those at Parangtritis Beach, are salient in the tourist experience. This theoretical stance is supported by the empirical findings in the current study, where self-congruence has a strong, statistically significant effect on visit intention.

Given this conceptual and empirical foundation, it is proposed that the stronger the self-congruence tourists experience with a destination, the more likely they are to form strong intentions to visit that destination.

H3: Self-congruence has a significant positive effect on visit intention.

Self-Congruence and Perceived Value

Despite the growing interest in identity-based destination marketing, empirical research examining the direct influence of self-congruence on perceived value in tourism remains relatively limited. Self-congruence, which refers to the psychological match between an individual's self-concept and the perceived image of a destination, is theorized to enhance the subjective value tourists assign to their experiences. However, only a handful of recent studies have empirically validated this relationship. Frías-Jamilena et al. [25] demonstrated that both self-congruence and motivational alignment significantly contribute to destination perceived value, emphasizing the importance of symbolic compatibility in shaping tourists' evaluations. Their study, conducted in Spain and the UK, provided robust cross-cultural evidence of this psychological mechanism. Likewise, Kim and Thapa [26], in their investigation of visitors to the Korean Demilitarized Zone, confirmed that self-congruity positively affects perceived value, which in turn influences satisfaction and destination loyalty. This finding underscores the role of identity relevance in enhancing destination experience utility. More recently, Gozen et al. [27] revealed that self-congruity acts as a significant moderator in the relationship between destination experience value and brand value, indicating that perceived value is amplified when tourists feel aligned with the destination's traits. Together, these studies suggest that self-congruity enhances perceived value through both direct and interactive pathways. Nevertheless, the scarcity of studies testing this effect across diverse tourism contexts points to a clear gap in the literature and reinforces the need for further empirical inquiry, particularly in non-Western and symbolic destinations such as cultural landscapes and coastal heritage sites.

Building upon these empirical findings, it is evident that self-congruence not only shapes tourists' emotional alignment with a destination but also enhances their cognitive evaluation of the overall value derived from the experience. When tourists perceive that a destination reflects or reinforces their self-identity, they are more likely to attribute higher emotional, symbolic, and experiential value to their visit. This alignment fosters stronger perceptions of worth, particularly in destinations that emphasize authenticity, symbolism, or cultural significance. Thus, self-congruence emerges as a key psychological antecedent of perceived value in the destination experience.

H4: Self-congruence has a significant positive effect on perceived value.

Novelty Seeking

Novelty seeking, or the motivation to pursue unfamiliar and different experiences, is a key psychological construct in understanding tourist behaviour. In tourism contexts, this motivation is often triggered by tourists' desire to escape routine and experience something unique. Blomstervik and Olsen [28] emphasize that novelty seeking is deeply rooted in individual personality traits, influencing how tourists perceive emotional stimulation and attitudinal responses to destinations. Aydın et al. [29] and Cheng and Lu [30] further note that novelty seeking is significantly shaped by the perceived image of a destination, suggesting that a destination's image acts as a push factor that motivates tourists to explore new experiences. Maghrifani et al. [31] show that a strong destination image can mediate the relationship between novelty seeking and travel intention, highlighting the role of cognitive and affective impressions in shaping exploratory behaviour. However, the relationship between novelty seeking and perceived value is not always straightforward. As revealed in the current study's context – sand dunes at Parangtritis Beach – the aesthetic appeal and uniqueness of the site do not directly translate into perceived value, which aligns with findings from previous studies on familiarity dampening novelty effects for returning visitors. Hence, novelty seeking must be understood as a dynamic factor influenced by both internal motivations and the symbolic and sensory stimuli presented by the destination.

Novelty Seeking and Perceived Value

Novelty seeking refers to the internal desire of individuals to pursue new, unusual, and stimulating experiences, often characterized by risk-taking, curiosity, and a break from routine. In tourism contexts, this trait plays an important role in shaping how tourists evaluate and derive value from their experiences. Cheng and Lu [30] explored novelty seeking in island tourism and found that although its direct impact on perceived value was not significant, novelty had a substantial indirect influence through hedonic responses – namely, emotional pleasure and enjoyment. This suggests that novelty-seeking tourists assign higher value to experiences that provide affective gratification. In contrast, Suhud et al. [32] provided empirical evidence of a direct and significant relationship between novelty seeking and perceived value in the context of white-water rafting tourism in Indonesia. Their findings imply that novelty-oriented tourists evaluate experiential activities more favourably, especially when these activities offer excitement, uniqueness, and challenge. The tourism setting likely plays a role in amplifying the novelty-value relationship, particularly in high-arousal adventure-based experiences. Meanwhile, Dabija et al. [33], though not focused on tourism, offered relevant insights by examining consumer trust in sharing economy platforms. They emphasize the role of psychological and emotional mechanisms in shaping perceived value and behavioural trust. While novelty was not their central variable, the framework underscores that non-functional experiential factors, including emotional appeal and innovation, significantly contribute to consumers' perception of value – offering conceptual alignment with novelty-driven tourism evaluation.

Despite its potential importance, the role of novelty seeking in shaping perceived value across tourism settings – particularly in nature-based and cultural destinations – remains under-explored and merits further investigation.

H5: Novelty seeking has a significant positive effect on perceived value.

Destination Image

Destination image represents the sum of beliefs, impressions, expectations, and emotional thoughts that individuals hold about a tourist destination. It significantly influences tourists' decision-making processes, visit intentions, and destination loyalty. As emphasized by Huang et al. [34], destination image encompasses both cognitive and affective components, which are critical for evaluating a location's attractiveness and competitiveness. Su et al. [35] further reinforce that the image of a heritage destination shapes visitor engagement and satisfaction, thus becoming a vital component of sustainable tourism development. Similarly, Pham and Khanh [36] reveal that perceived destination image positively affects tourists' ecotourism intentions, especially when supported by environmental concern and a long-term time perspective. In line with this, Pereira et al. [37] establish that destination image acts as a mediating variable between travel motivation and tourist attitude, ultimately influencing behavioural intention. Moreover, Glyptou et al. [38] argue that during times of sustained crises, destination image co-creation becomes crucial to maintain trust and emotional bonds with tourists. Within the coastal tourism context, such as Parangtritis Beach in Indonesia, constructing a positive and self-congruent image is essential in cultivating intention to visit, particularly when novelty and symbolic value are embedded in the portrayal of the site.

Destination Image and Visit Intention

Recent tourism studies consistently confirm that destination image plays a central role in predicting tourists' intention to visit. Hamdy and Eid [39] found that perceived destination image significantly influences travel intentions, particularly when the image highlights cultural richness, safety, and accessibility. Correspondingly, Harrill et al. [40] demonstrated that both cognitive and affective components of destination image contribute to overall image formation, which in turn affects tourists' behavioural intentions. Liang and Lai [41] identified destination image as a mediating variable between brand image and visit intention, reinforcing the argument that emotional and visual perception of a place is essential for destination selection. In rural and emerging tourism settings, Rodrigues et al. [42] reported that a favourable destination image is a strong predictor of both initial and repeat visit intentions, emphasizing its strategic importance for sustainable tourism development. Additionally, Suban [43] highlighted that destination image affects revisit intention both directly and indirectly, thus positioning it as a foundational element in tourist behavioural models. These studies collectively support the role of destination image as a cognitive-affective stimulus that activates visit-related motivation across a wide range of tourist profiles and destinations.

Grounded in these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed for this study.

H6: Destination image has a significant positive effect on visit intention.

Perceived Value

Perceived value is a central construct in tourism behaviour research, referring to tourists' subjective evaluation of the benefits received relative to the costs incurred. This evaluation is multidimensional, involving emotional, social, and functional aspects of tourism experiences. According to Peña et al. [44], gamified environmental interpretation significantly enhances perceived value by making tourist experiences more immersive and engaging. Özcanlı and Bayram [45] further argue that perceived value is shaped by satisfaction and trust, particularly in

the post-COVID tourism context, where fear and risk influence destination choice. Moreover, Peng et al. [46] incorporate destination attitude into the luxury consumption value model, asserting that perceived value in tourism is influenced not only by price-quality balance but also by symbolic and experiential factors. The perceived value construct also plays a mediating role between destination image and visits intention, as evidenced by Ragab et al. [47], highlighting how tourists' valuation of experiences influences subsequent behavioural decisions. Cham et al. [48] demonstrate that in the context of medical tourism, perceived value is significantly influenced by trust, emotional attachment, and service quality, emphasizing the need for destinations to align service delivery with visitors' expectations.

Perceived Value and Visit Intention

Perceived value represents tourists' evaluation of the worth of their tourism experience, balancing the benefits received against the sacrifices made. This includes tangible aspects like price and service quality, as well as intangible aspects such as emotional and symbolic benefits. According to Suhud et al. [32], perceived value significantly influences the intention to visit, particularly when tourists feel they have gained sufficient benefits from engaging in adventure tourism activities like white-water rafting. The study emphasizes that high perceived value is positively associated with behavioural intentions in tourism.

Supporting this view, Frias-Jamilena et al. [25] assert that the perceived congruity between a destination and tourists' values strengthens perceived value, which subsequently enhances visit intention. Similarly, Cheng and Lu [30] demonstrate that novelty and hedonics in island tourism settings positively influence perceived value, and that perceived value directly determines tourists' revisiting intention. In the same context, Dabija et al. [33] report that platforms and destinations perceived as trustworthy and valuable tend to elicit stronger visit intentions from potential users, especially in a post-pandemic era where safety and digital experience quality are pivotal.

The empirical results of Suhud et al. [32] validate the mediating effect of perceived value between tourism stimuli and behavioural response, affirming its central role in shaping destination decision-making. In sand dune tourism, Gozen et al. [27] find that perceived value not only predicts behavioural outcomes like visit intention, but also interacts with self-congruity and brand perception to shape tourist responses.

Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H7: Perceived value has a significant positive effect on visit intention.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual research model developed for this study, integrating six key constructs – destination personality, self-congruence, novelty seeking, perceived value, destination image, and visit intention – to examine tourist behavioural intentions in the coastal sand dune context of Parangtritis Beach, Yogyakarta. The model is theoretically grounded in self-congruity theory and destination branding literature, positioning self-congruence as a central psychological mechanism that influences tourists' perceptions of destination image and perceived value, which in turn affect visit intention. Destination personality is posited to influence both destination image and indirectly visit intention through perceptual and emotional appraisals. Novelty seeking is hypothesized to influence perceived value, reflecting the role of intrinsic motivation in value construction. Each linkage in the model is guided by existing empirical findings and theoretical propositions from destination marketing and consumer psychology, reflecting an integrated

perspective on how symbolic, affective, and experiential attributes shape behavioural outcomes in tourism. The model also acknowledges the contextual uniqueness of the setting – coastal dunes that are culturally sacred and visually distinct – where symbolic meanings, emotional resonance, and self-identity alignment are likely to play amplified roles in determining tourist behaviour. Through this structural model, the study seeks to advance understanding of the psychological and perceptual antecedents of sustainable visit intention in under-researched yet symbolically rich coastal tourism destinations.

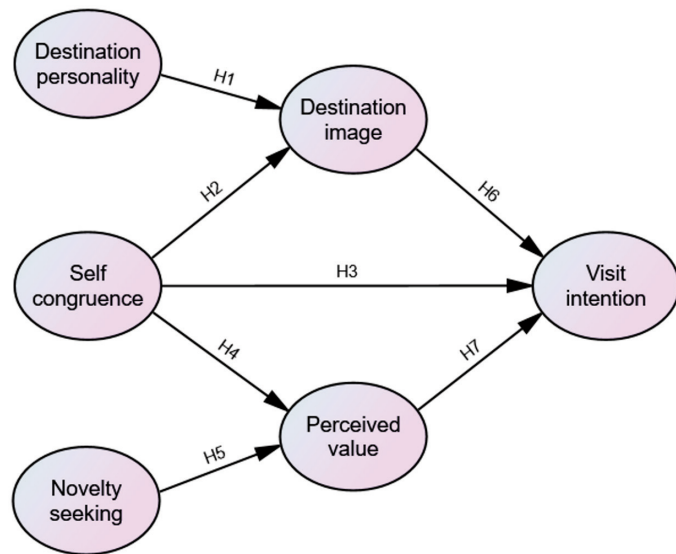


Fig. 1. The Research Model

Material and methods

Sample

The sample for this study consisted of tourists aged 17 years or older who were aware of the existence of the sand dunes at Parangtritis Beach, located in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. A convenient sampling method was employed to recruit participants. Those who expressed interest in participating were provided with a link to the online questionnaire. The recruitment was conducted through direct personal approaches as well as via WhatsApp communication, ensuring accessibility and voluntary engagement.

Out of 254 individuals who initially responded to the survey, 246 respondents (96.85%) met the inclusion criteria and completed the questionnaire in its entirety. This high response validity rate suggests effective targeting and appropriate alignment of the sampling procedure with the study's demographic and contextual focus. The final sample was thus deemed suitable for further quantitative analysis using structural equation modelling techniques.

The research adhered to the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki and was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Institute for Research and Community Services Universitas Negeri Jakarta (No: 1648/UN39.14/PT).

Measurement

A 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree) and representing participants' extent of agreement for each statement, was used to measure each construct in this study. This scale for response was selected to facilitate response variability and eliminate the common neutral midpoint for odd-numbered Likert scales and gain stronger response.

Each variable was assessed using adapted and validated indicators from prior studies. Self-congruence was measured using items adapted from Kumar and Nayak [18], which reflect the alignment between tourists' self-image and their perception of typical visitors to the destination. Perceived value was measured using dimensions based on Caber et al. [49], capturing both emotional and social utility gained from the visit. Destination image was operationalized using bipolar adjective scales derived from Hosany et al. [50], reflecting tourists' affective and cognitive evaluations of Parangtritis Beach. Destination personality was measured using attributes adapted from Ekinici and Hosany [51], capturing anthropomorphic traits associated with the destination. Novelty seeking was measured based on the scale developed by Lee and Crompton [52], emphasizing tourists' desire for new and different experiences. Finally, visit intention was assessed using items adapted from Su et al. [53] and Kim et al. [54], reflecting participants planned and anticipated future behaviour regarding visiting Parangtritis Beach.

Data Analysis Methods

The research utilized a four-step quantitative data analysis process to guarantee the measurability and structural models' validity. First, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using SPSS version 29 was used to test for indicators' validity. Based on standard thresholds, items that had factor loading above 0.40 were regarded as valid. The second step entailed checking for internal consistency for each construct using Cronbach's alpha, again through SPSS version 29. The reliability coefficient above 0.70 was considered acceptable, hence satisfactory internal consistency for all measured items. The two initial tests guaranteed that constructs utilized in later modelling were not only valid but reliable.

The third stage tested Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values to assess convergent validity, with a minimum acceptable threshold set at 0.50. In the final stage, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was applied using AMOS version 29 to test the proposed hypotheses. A hypothesis was considered supported if the Critical Ratio (CR) exceeded 1.96, reflecting significance at the 0.05 level. Model fit was further evaluated using several goodness-of-fit indices, following recommended benchmarks: p-value between 0.05 and 1.00 [55], $\chi^2/DF \leq 2.00$ [56], CFI ≥ 0.95 [57], and RMSEA ≤ 0.05 [58]. These comprehensive tests ensured that the structural model provided a statistically sound representation of the relationships between constructs in the context of coastal tourism at Parangtritis Beach.

Results

Participants

Table 1 presents the demographic and experiential profile of 246 survey participants from the Parangtritis Beach Sand Dunes in Yogyakarta. Female respondents were more numerous (70.3%) than men (29.7%). The highest group based on age distribution were young adults falling into the 17-20 years category (32.9%), followed by those aged between 21 and 24 years (30.1%) and having a very strong presence for young adult tourists. The survey further had participants between 25 and 29 years (18.7%) and between 30 and 34 years (8.1%) and smaller percentages for larger categories, demonstrating a wide but youth-dominated spectrum for age.

Regarding occupational status, participants were almost equally divided between those currently employed (45.9%) and those not working (45.1%), with a smaller proportion (8.9%) operating their own businesses. In marital status, a significant majority were single (72.0%), with married participants acco-

unting for 27.2%. The educational background of respondents showed that most had completed senior high school (43.5%) or held an undergraduate degree (41.9%), followed by smaller groups with diploma qualifications (8.5%) or postgraduate degrees (2.4%).

Importantly, 75.2% of participants reported prior experience visiting the sand dunes at Parangtritis Beach, while 24.8% did not. This mix of experienced and first-time visitors enhances the generalizability of the study's insights, particularly in understanding how destination personality, image, and self-congruence operate across differing levels of familiarity with the site. The participant profile supports the relevance of investigating visit intention and perceived value in a demographic dominated by youth, education, and social tourism motivations.

Table 1. Profile of participants

Profile		Frequency	Percent
Sex	Male	73	29.7
	Female	173	70.3
	Total	246	100.0
Group of age	>49	3	1.2
	17-20	81	32.9
	21-24	74	30.1
	25-29	46	18.7
	30-34	20	8.1
	35-39	9	3.7
	40-44	7	2.8
	45-49	6	2.4
Occupational status	Employed	113	45.9
	Unemployed	111	45.1
	Self-employed	22	8.9
Marital status	Unmarried	177	72.0
	Separated/divorced	1	0.4
	Married	67	27.2
	Widowed	1	0.4
Level of education completed	Less than high school	9	3.7
	Diploma	21	8.5
	Postgraduate	6	2.4
	Undergraduate	103	41.9
	High school	107	43.5
Experience visiting Parangtritis Beach Sand Dunes	No	61	24.8
	Yes	185	75.2

Data Validity, AVE, and Reliability

Table 2 presents psychometric validation of all constructs via factor loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Cronbach's alpha. There is proper internal consistency across all constructs such that Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all are above 0.70. Values for AVE range between 0.607 and 0.840 and demonstrate proper convergent validity [59]. Most factor loadings exceeded 0.70, indicating robust indicator reliability. However, a small number of items exhibited loadings below 0.50. While such items are often removed in purely statistical assessments, we retained them in this study due to their theoretical significance

and conceptual distinctiveness within the construct they were designed to measure.

In particular, the construct visit intention demonstrates very good reliability ($\alpha = 0.880$) and high convergent validity (AVE = 0.721), and its items exhibit loadings from 0.561 to 0.941. Destination image also exhibits strong psychometric qualities ($\alpha = 0.923$; AVE = 0.657), which are reinforced by high and uniform factor loadings for both cognitive and affective items. The construct self-congruence obtained strong reliability ($\alpha = 0.897$) and AVE of 0.660, which highlight psychological homogeneity of items for identity alignment. Destination personality was operationalized via three dimensions, which exhibit reliability from 0.828 to 0.873 and AVE measures above the threshold level. Novelty seeking ($\alpha = 0.837$; AVE = 0.619) and both components of perceived value ($\alpha = 0.904$ and $\alpha = 0.612$) exhibit reliability and validity thresholds and, therefore, demonstrate uniformity of capturing tourists' desire for new experiences and valuation of symbolic or social qualities.

Table 2. Results of data validity, AVE, and reliability

Variables and Indicators	Factor Loadings	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha
Visit intention		0.721	0.880
Vi8 I will probably visit this destination in the next two years.	0.941		
Vi5 I want to visit this destination in the next two years.	0.930		
Vi2 I intend to visit this destination in the next two years.	0.870		
Vi6 I want to visit this destination in the next three years.	0.858		
Vi7 I will probably visit this destination in the next one year.	0.855		
Vi3 I intend to visit this destination in the next three years.	0.841		
Vi4 I want to visit this destination in the next one year.	0.826		
Vi1 I intend to visit this destination in the next one year.	0.561		
Destination image		0.657	0.923
Di3 Parangtritis Sand Dunes are not attractive/charming	0.845		
Di7 Parangtritis Sand Dunes are unfriendly/friendly	0.834		
Di2 Parangtritis Sand Dunes are sad/relaxing	0.834		
Di1 Parangtritis Sand Dunes are unpleasant/fun	0.791		
Di4 Parangtritis Sand Dunes are gloomy/exciting	0.775		
Di8 Parangtritis Sand Dunes are isolated/easy to access	0.723		
At9 Parangtritis Sand Dunes are boring/interesting	0.707		
At5 Parangtritis Sand Dunes are noisy/quiet	0.705		

Variables and Indicators	Factor Loadings	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha
Destination personality		0.726	0.873
Dp7 Alive	0.705		
Dp6 Excited	0.652		
Dp9 Full of enthusiasm	0.600		
Dp10 Fun	0.558		
Self-congruence		0.660	0.897
Sc2 The image of tourists visiting this destination is similar to how others see me.	0.810		
Sc4 The image of tourists visiting this destination is similar to how I would like to see myself.	0.798		
Sc6 The image of tourists visiting this destination is similar to how I would ideally like to be seen by others.	0.769		
Sc3 The image of tourists visiting this destination is similar to who I would like to be.	0.758		
Sc5 The image of tourists visiting this destination is similar to how I would like others to see me.	0.679		
Sc1 The image of tourists visiting this destination is similar to my image.	0.665		
Novelty seeking		0.619	0.837
Ns2 I like to find myself in a destination where I can explore new things.	0.783		
Ns3 I like to experience new and different things while on vacation.	0.777		
Ns5 My ideal vacation is when I get involved in things I have never experienced before.	0.754		
Ns4 I enjoy a change of environment that allows me to experience something new while on vacation.	0.745		
Ns1 I seek adventure while on vacation.	0.561		
Perceived value (1)		0.840	0.904
Pv4 Visiting this destination will improve the way I am perceived by others.	0.871		
Pv5 Visiting this destination will help me feel accepted by others.	0.851		
Pv6 Visiting this destination will allow me to impress others.	0.804		
Pv3 Visiting this destination will make me feel more socially accepted.	0.697		
Destination personality (1)		0.676	0.836
Dp2 Polite	0.805		
Dp3 Honest	0.790		
Dp4 Respectful	0.613		
Dp1 Welcoming	0.483		

Variables and Indicators	Factor Loadings	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha
Destination personality (2)		0.661	0.828
Dp12 Spiritual	0.873		
Dp11 Religious	0.813		
Dp14 Traditional	0.676		
Dp13 Calm	0.427		
Perceived value (2)		0.607	0.612
Pv6 Visiting this destination will provide an authentic experience.	0.785		
Pv7 Visiting this destination will satisfy my curiosity.	0.770		
Pv8 Visiting this destination will make me feel adventurous.	0.429		

Hypotheses Tests

Figure 2 The Structural Model of the Hypotheses Tests visually illustrates the structural linkages among the seven hypotheses under study in this research, which explores tourist behaviour in the setting of sand dunes at Parangtritis Beach, Yogyakarta. The model integrates various constructs – destination personality, self-congruence, novelty seeking, perceived value, destination image, and visit intention – based on theoretical linkages from previous research. As illustrated, self-congruence has a strong influence on destination image, perceived value, and visit intention, justifying its dominance in shaping tourist perceptions and behavioural intentions. Destination personality is also shown to positively impact destination image, and perceived value is made to be a strong predictor of visit intention. However, those from novelty seeking to perceived value and from destination image to visit intention are statistically not significant, indicating distinctive dynamics entailed in tourist judgment in this naturally and culturally distinctive dune shoreline site. The site of sand dunes Parangtritis beach – beautiful and symbolically sacred – may further place conditions whereby congruence between tourist self-image and perceived destination attributes influences intentions to revisit or recommend.

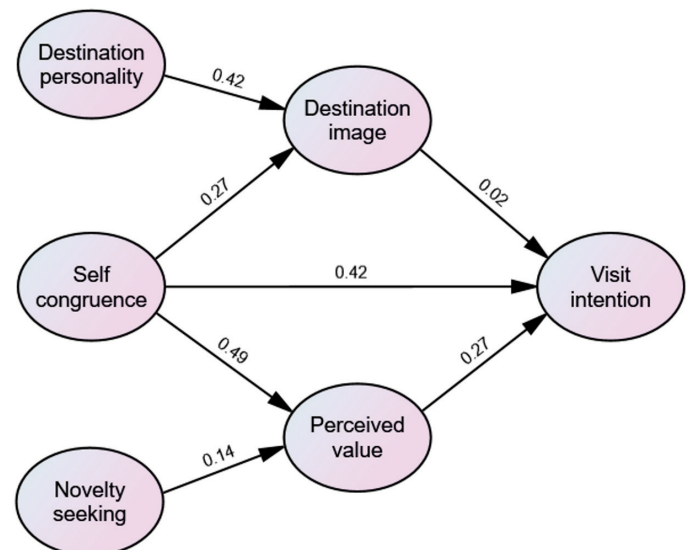


Fig. 2. The Structural Model of the Hypotheses Tests

Table 3 Test Results for Hypotheses presents statistical results for the estimation of the structural model, evaluating significance and strength for hypothesized linkages between primary variables in sand dunes of Parangtritis. The findings show that five out of seven hypotheses are statistically validated. Particularly, destination personality has a significant impact on destination image (H1: C.R. = 3.880, $p < 0.001$), substantiating the impact of traits and personalities in place identity perceptions for tourists. Self-congruence significantly determines destination image (H2: C.R. = 2.932, $p = 0.003$) and visit intention (H3: C.R. = 3.960, $p < 0.001$) and perceived value (H4: C.R. = 4.912, $p < 0.001$) importantly, highlighting personal relevance and congruence between self-image and its relevance in tourist assessments. Perceived value has a subsequent strong positive impact in promoting visit intention (H7: C.R. = 3.086, $p = 0.002$), substantiating its mediation during decision-making.

Two hypotheses were not supported: novelty seeking is not strongly related to perceived value (H5: C.R. = 1.485, $p = 0.138$), and destination image is not a strong predictor of visit intention (H6: C.R. = 0.277, $p = 0.782$). The indications are that even if tourists value uniqueness and aesthetics, both cannot directly translate into behavioural intention in the unique context of Parangtritis sand dune coastline. The results of this study highlight self-congruent identity and perceived social and emotional value in promoting sustainable visits to Parangtritis sand dune destinations.

Table 3. Results of the hypotheses tests

Hypotheses	Paths	C.R.	P	Results
H1	Destination personality > Destination image	3.880	***	Accepted
H2	Self-congruence > Destination image	2.932	0.003	Accepted
H3	Self-congruence > Visit intention	3.960	***	Accepted
H4	Self-congruence > Perceived value	4.912	***	Accepted
H5	Novelty seeking > Perceived value	1.485	0.138	Rejected
H6	Destination image > Visit intention	0.277	0.782	Rejected
H7	Perceived value > Visit intention	3.086	0.002	Accepted

Discussion

That destination personality has a significant impact on destination image (H1) gives robust empirical support for the incorporation of personality-based branding strategies in tourism scenarios, especially coastal dune environments. This finding is consistent with the theoretical perspective that anthropomorphic destination attributions such as sincerity, excitement, and competence are mental shortcuts that influence how tourists construct destination image's cognitive and affective components [52, 60]. In the Parangtritis Sand Dunes scenario, the distinctiveness and symbolic nature of the landscape probably bolsters the perceived personality thereof, enhancing how the destination is self-imagined internally and how it is affectively experienced by potential tourists. This confirms the proposition that destination image is neither receptively received nor merely cognitively formed, but actively negotiated with symbolic and

psychological filters [50]. This finding reaffirms previous studies with heritage and rural tourist environments, where destination personality has been known to create affective responses and image consistency perceptions [10]. For dune-based tourist destinations, this implies that branding and communication strategies should concentrate not only on visual beauty or functionality, but also on creating an idiosyncratic and harmonious personality that constructs positive destination image and, consequently, behavioural outcomes.

The confirmation of H2, which reveals that self-congruence significantly affects destination image, reinforces the theoretical proposition that individuals project their self-concept onto destinations that symbolically align with their identities [18, 61]. This alignment fosters more favourable cognitive and emotional evaluations, as tourists perceive the destination not only as a physical place but also as an extension of their self-image. In the context of Parangtritis Sand Dunes – an ecologically and culturally distinct environment – this symbolic resonance becomes particularly salient. Tourists who perceive the dunes as reflective of their adventurous, spiritual, or nature-oriented self-concepts are more likely to construct a positive image of the destination. This finding is consistent with Suhud et al. [60], who found that self-congruence enhances destination image in village tourism by deepening emotional attachment and perceived relevance. It also aligns with the notion that symbolic fit can serve as a psychological filter through which destination attributes are interpreted and emotionally encoded [50]. The implication is that destination managers should design marketing narratives and experiential cues that activate identity alignment, especially in niche or meaningful environments like coastal dunes, where affective and symbolic values often supersede utilitarian ones.

Surprisingly, the analysis revealed that novelty seeking was not significantly related to perceived value (H3), indicating that the pursuit of new and exotic experiences does not directly translate into greater experiential value for visitors to the Parangtritis Sand Dunes. This finding stands in contrast to prior studies that have identified novelty as a key driver of perceived value in adventure and experiential travel contexts [30, 52]. One possible theoretical explanation lies in the symbolic and sacred character of the Parangtritis Sand Dunes. In such contexts, visitors may prioritize emotional resonance and identity alignment over stimulation or uniqueness. As Suhud et al. [32] suggest, tourists visiting culturally or ecologically significant sites often value authenticity and symbolic congruence more highly than novelty. This suggests that in destinations imbued with spiritual or cultural meaning, perceived value is derived less from novelty and more from the degree to which the destination affirms or expresses aspects of the visitor's identity.

Confirmation of H4, which reveals a substantial association between self-congruence and perceived value, reinforces the theoretical proposition that tourists' internal congruence with a destination adds substantially to their valuation of the experience. This finding is in line with self-congruence theory's proposition [61], which asserts that destinations that are congruent with the self-image are more prone to stimulate satisfaction, affective involvement, and feelings of substantial engagement. In Parangtritis Sand Dunes, tourists who experience the landscape as expressive of their self – as either ecological awareness, culture affinity, or spiritual symbolism – are more prone to find the experience valuable. Previous studies by Kim and Thapa [26] and Sabote et al. [62] similarly established that self-congruence considerably boosts perceived value in heritage and nature-based tours, implying that symbolic correspondence amplifies perceived value. This reveals the importance of identity as a lens

through which tourists evaluate not merely what a destination provides, but what it symbolizes. For marketers and destination planners, these observations underscore the importance of developing experience and stories that cohere with visitors' ideal or real self-concepts, thereby raising not only affective engagement but also the perceived value of the totality of the tourist offering.

The finding verifying H5, that destination image is significantly influenced by novelty seeking, underscores the importance of cognitive stimulation and perceived distinctiveness in determining how tourists cognitively construct and affectively experience a destination. This is consistent with the view that people with strong novelty-seeking profiles develop more positive destination images when confronted with new, unique, or unusual environments [53, 63]. In the Parangtritis case, the distinctiveness of tropical barchan sand dunes and the juxtaposition of geological, sacred, and recreational qualities might especially attract tourists with novelty-seeking profiles, increasing cognitive and affective perceptions of the destination. The finding commends itself to Cheng and Lu [30], who found that novelty has a net positive impact on destination image by exerting influence via memory and affective engagement during leisure. This implies that novelty-based tourists are not drawn to difference merely for hedonic stimulation but instead interpret novelty through the lens of symbolic resonance and meaningful experiential differentiation. Managers at coastal dune destinations take away the message that emphasizing unusual environmental and cultural elements – in the form of sand dune ecology, myths, or native interpretation, for example – as part of an attraction package should draw novelty seekers and fashion robust, differentiated destination images.

Surprisingly, the study found that destination image had no significant impact on visit intention (H6), contrary to numerous previous studies that have identified a strong relationship between tourists' image perceptions and behavioral intentions [64, 65]. This non-significant result suggests that in the context of Parangtritis Sand Dunes, traditional or general destination image may not play a decisive role in shaping visit intention. One possible explanation is that visitors to symbolically significant or culturally charged locations may rely more on internalized, identity-relevant factors – such as affective attachment, perceived symbolic value, or self-congruence – when forming travel intentions. In such settings, the mere existence of a favorable or appealing image may not be sufficient unless it resonates personally with the visitor's values, beliefs, or self-concept. This interpretation is consistent with Suhud et al. [60], who found that in cultural tourism contexts, destination image influenced visit intention only indirectly, mediated by emotional and symbolic pathways. In fragile or meaning-laden destinations like Parangtritis, visitors may prioritize authenticity, self-reflection, and deeper experiential meaning over more superficial or generic image cues.

Validation of H7, that perceived value has a significant impact on visit intention, reaffirms established theories of consumer behaviour and tourist studies that value perceptions lie at the heart of decisional processes [26]. In Parangtritis Sand Dunes, tourists who find the experience to have emotional, cultural, or environmental value are more disposed to plan a visit. This is compatible with Sabiote et al. [62], who postulate that where destinations provide symbolic and experiential advantages that chime with tourists' internalized values, the perceived value acts as an influential antecedent of intention. The present study's finding additionally implies that at identity-congruent destinations like coastal dune sceneries, value cannot simply be transactional or utilitarian, but intensely affective and symbolic. Tourists con-

sider the price-benefit ratio but are also mindful of the experience's authenticity, self-relevance, and emotive depth. This finding points out the critical necessity for destination managers to create greater perceived value by providing deep, valuable, and personalized experiences – rather than chancing merely on physicality or visual grandeur. In this way, an explicit value-based approach may assist not only intention but visitor loyalty and advocacy over the longer term, especially in ecologically and culturally sensitive tourism environments.

Conclusions

This study set out to examine the psychological and perceptual determinants of tourists' visit intention in the unique setting of the Parangtritis coastal sand dunes in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Specifically, it aimed to assess how destination personality, self-congruence, and novelty seeking influence perceived value and destination image, and how these, in turn, affect tourists' intention to visit. Grounded in self-congruence theory and destination branding literature, the research employed structural equation modelling to validate a conceptual framework that integrates both symbolic and affective predictors of tourist behaviour.

The findings show that self-congruence is an important determinant of destination image and perceived value, which ultimately predicts tourists' visit intention. Destination personality had a significant impact upon destination image, supporting the personified destination character role in forming favourable cognitive and affective judgment. Additionally, perceived value significantly predicted visit intention, demonstrating tourists' evaluative thought regarding experiential value as a critical determinant of action. On the other hand, novelty seeking had no significant impact upon perceived value, and destination image had no direct impact upon visit intention, tentatively implying that symbolic compatibility could have greater priority than thrill-based aspiration within susceptible, identity-central settings such as sand dunes.

This research expands theoretical discussions of tourist behaviour by transferring self-congruence theory into the relatively uncharted environment of dunes-based coastal locations. In contrast to previous studies that have mostly cantered on urban or heritage locations, this research provides empirical support that psychological-symbolic congruence significantly influences destination image, perceived value, and behavioural intention even at natural, ecologically sensitive locations. In addition to destination personality and novelty seeking and self-congruence, the model provides an integrative perspective regarding how both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators interact with each other in shaping tourist behaviour. The results further nuance existing understandings by demonstrating that novelty seeking does not necessarily translate into perceived value, particularly at sites where environmental sensitivity and symbolic significance take precedence over the pursuit of excitement or stimulation. In the process, the research frames dunes tourism neither simply as an aesthetic nor recreational experience, but rather a contemplative, identity-based engagement that is moderated by symbolic meaning.

From a manager's perspective, this study gives different strategic orientations toward planning sustainable coastal dune tourism. Tourism marketers and destination planners must take identity-based branding emphasizing symbolic, culture-based, and emotion-based attributes aligned with visitor self-concept. Evolving the destination's perceived personality – in narrations, interpretive signs, and community stories – can enhance touri-

sts' image perception along with affective attachment. In addition, the significant role that perceived value plays here suggests that destination experiences must be crafted such that they offer authenticity, environmental care, and culture fit rather than reliance purely on thrill- or newness-based attractions. In such delicate environments as Parangtritis, such strategies are essential toward balancing conservation objectives with tourism development, creating not only visit intention but even sustainable and responsible tourist behaviour.

Although this study provides useful information concerning tourist behaviour for dunes-based coastal tourism, there are various limitations that should be noted. First, data were gathered with the use of a non-probability data-collection technique (convenience sampling), thereby reducing the generalizability of results outside the sample of respondents who are knowledgeable regarding Parangtritis Sand Dunes. As such, the results may not accurately represent the views or experiences of broader or more diverse populations. Second, the study employed only cross-sectional self-reported data that could be prone to biases like social desirability or temporary affective states. Third, although the model included important psychological and perceptual variables, other potentially influential constructs like environmental concern, place attachment, or perceived crowding were excluded. Fourth, the study sampled only one geographic area for Indonesia, which, despite being distinct, could restrict the outcome's generality across diverse cultural or environmental settings. Finally, one limitation of this study is the use of a forced-choice 6-point Likert scale without a neutral midpoint. Although this approach reduces the likelihood of respondents defaulting to a neutral position, it may also have introduced response bias by compelling participants to choose a positive or negative response even when ambivalence or neutrality existed.

This study acknowledges several limitations, which point to directions for future research. Firstly, whilst the work contributes to the literature of the self-congruence paradigm of dunes coastal tourism, its scope was limited to the case of Parangtritis Beach. Future work might reproduce the model for other resorts of a coastal or island nature, both in and beyond Indonesia, to establish its generalizability [66]. Secondly, whilst for the current work self-congruence and its products were the primary subject of analysis, other studies might introduce moderating variables of the type of digital storytelling intention [67] or of the role of digital publicity and of e-WOM in reinforcing or moderating self-congruence effects [68]. Yet another possible line of work is to transfer the paradigm to special-interest tourism, for instance in volcano, heritage, or dark tourism, where symbolic meanings and place identity are typically higher [68].

Additionally, including constructs of sustainability awareness and destination credibility, which have revealed to impact destination image and behavioural intentions, respectively, would further improve the model [69]. Scholars can also examine the novel technologies of metaverse or AI services in enhancing the self-congruent experiences of visitors based on prior analyses [70, 71]. Moreover, future work can focus on longitudinal designs to follow the evolving nature of self-congruence and destination selection longitudinally, considering the evolution of destination narratives through both official and descriptive sources. Finally, future studies could adopt probability-based sampling techniques or conduct comparative research across different geographic or cultural contexts. Cross-cultural studies would help determine the extent to which the findings are applicable in other settings and enhance the external validity of the research.

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