



Economic Valuation and Analysis of Factors Influencing Tourist Visits to Taeno Waterfall Using the Travel Cost Method (TCM)

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Abstract. *The tourism sector is one of the fastest-growing industries worldwide. Tourism plays a crucial role in driving economic growth, particularly in Indonesia, where the tourism economy is still developing. Taeno Waterfall, located in Rumah Tiga Village, Ambon City, is a natural tourism site with high attractiveness, both in terms of landscape and ecological value. However, it still faces limitations regarding accessibility and the availability of supporting facilities. This study aims to assess the economic value and analyze the factors influencing tourist visits to Taeno Waterfall using the Travel Cost Method (TCM). The study collected primary data directly from respondents through questionnaires, with a total of 40 respondents. The TCM was applied by calculating the travel expenses incurred by tourists to reach the site. The results indicate that the economic value of Taeno Waterfall, based on the Travel Cost Method, amounts to IDR 6,970,000, with an average travel cost of IDR 174,250. These findings demonstrate that Taeno Waterfall has significant potential as a nature-based tourism destination. Factors affecting tourist visits include waterfall facilities, accessibility, comfort, and the quality of the tourism experience.*

Keywords: *Economic Value; Nature-Based Tourism; Taeno Waterfall; Tourist Visits; Travel Cost Method (TCM).*

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the countries that leverages the tourism sector as a source of foreign exchange income (Yakup, 2019). The advancement of Indonesia's tourism sector is reflected in *The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report*, which ranked Indonesia 40th in the global tourism competitiveness index in 2019, up from 42nd in 2017 (WEF, 2019). Following the pandemic and changes in methodology (from TTCI to TTDI), Indonesia demonstrated a significant improvement (Budisusila, 2021). In the 2024 *Travel and Tourism Development Index*, Indonesia jumped ten ranks to 22nd out of 119 countries worldwide, making it the second-highest ranked country in ASEAN, only behind Singapore.

Maluku Province, located in eastern Indonesia with Ambon as its capital, possesses abundant natural resources with high potential for tourism development (Hanoeboen, 2017). The region offers diverse tourism attractions, including natural tourism such as beaches, waterfalls, springs, and tropical forests rich in flora and fauna, as well as cultural tourism reflecting the local traditions and wisdom of the Maluku community (Ohorella & Prihantoro, 2021). These potentials position Maluku, particularly Ambon City, as a promising destination for both domestic and international tourists.

According to data from the Maluku Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism, Ambon City hosts several well-known tourist attractions that serve as key draws for visitors (Solemede et al., 2020). Among the various tourism types, beach tourism remains the main attraction for visitors to Ambon. Popular beaches include Hunimua Beach, Natsepa Beach, and

Namalatu Beach, whose scenic beauty, environmental cleanliness, and unique characteristics have made them iconic marine tourism destinations in Ambon (Hanoeboen, 2017).

One of the most appealing tourist destinations in Ambon City is Taeno Waterfall, located in Rumah Tiga Village (Mandaku et al., 2025). Its uniqueness and natural beauty make Taeno Waterfall a prime candidate for development as a flagship tourism destination in the Maluku coastal area. Its relatively untouched and natural condition attracts visitors seeking nature-based and adventure tourism experiences. Another attraction is the natural pool at the base of the waterfall, where visitors can swim or enjoy water activities. The fresh and natural atmosphere surrounding the pool provides a refreshing and calming experience, making it an ideal destination for nature enthusiasts and tourists seeking tranquility in the outdoors (Leimena et al., 2025).

Given the significant potential of natural tourism sites like Taeno Waterfall, it is important to evaluate their economic value using appropriate methods to provide an accurate picture of their contribution to regional economic development. One widely used approach to estimate the economic value of tourism is the Travel Cost Method (TCM) (Saptutyningsih & Ningrum, 2017; Arie et al., 2024; Sukatno et al., 2025). This method uses visitors' travel expenses as a proxy for valuing a tourism site, producing results that can inform policy decisions for sustainable tourism management and development (Sukwika & Rahmatulloh, 2021).

The TCM is applied in this study to estimate tourism economic value because it is considered one of the most accurate methods for this purpose. The method accounts for travel costs incurred by visitors and the distance traveled to reach the site, providing a realistic estimate of the monetary value tourists attribute to the location (John & Johnson, 1985). According to Hanemann (1980), Loomis & White (1996), and Parsons & Kealy (2004), TCM's advantage lies in its ability to estimate tourism economic value accurately based on travel costs and visitation data. Additionally, it can provide insights into visitor preferences and the factors influencing their decisions to visit specific attractions.

Several previous studies have applied TCM to estimate tourism economic value. For example, Widodo (2016) estimated the economic value of Merbabu Mountain tourism, Ariyanti et al. (2019) studied Halimun Salak National Park, Hidayatullah et al. (2017) analyzed Bangsring Beach in Banyuwangi, Pramitasari et al. (2019) evaluated Klayar Beach in Pacitan, and Mahfudz et al. (2020) assessed Popoh Beach in Gunungkidul.

Previous studies have demonstrated that the *Travel Cost Method* (TCM) has been widely applied to estimate the economic value of various tourism destinations, including mountain

areas, national parks, and coastal attractions. However, empirical research estimating the economic value of waterfall-based tourism destinations, particularly Taeno Waterfall in Ambon City, remains limited. Furthermore, few studies have specifically examined the factors influencing tourist visitation rates using the TCM framework in this destination. This gap highlights the need for further empirical investigation to quantify the economic value of Taeno Waterfall while providing a more comprehensive understanding of tourist demand characteristics.

Accordingly, this study aims to estimate the economic value of Taeno Waterfall using the *Travel Cost Method* (TCM) and to analyze the factors influencing tourist visitation rates, with particular emphasis on travel costs, travel distance, socioeconomic characteristics, and other relevant determinants.

2. METHOD

Study Area

This study was conducted at Taeno Waterfall, located in Taeno Hamlet, Teluk Ambon District, Ambon City, Maluku Province (Figure 1). The site was selected because it is a natural tourism destination with high ecotourism potential and provides economic benefits to the surrounding community.

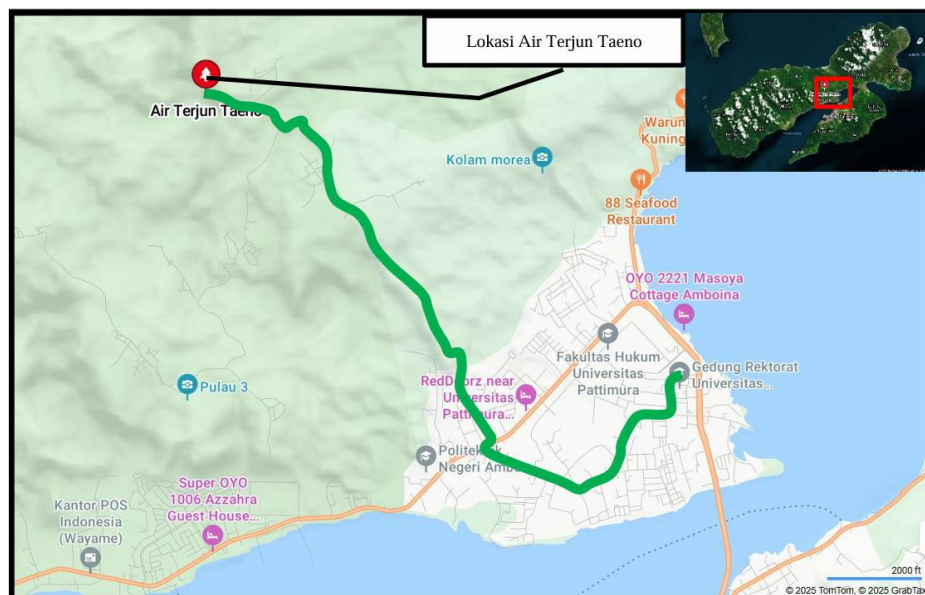


Figure 1. Location of Taeno Waterfall (Mandaku et al., 2025).

Population and Sample

Population refers to the entire set of events, objects, or individuals that share similar characteristics and are the focus of the research, and is therefore considered the universe of the study (Ferdinand, 2006). In this study, the population consisted of all tourists visiting Taeno Waterfall in Ambon City.

According to Ferdinand (2006), a sample is a subset of the population, consisting of several members of the population. Data collection in this study was somewhat challenging if not conducted directly, as there could be discrepancies in perception between the researcher and respondents. Therefore, the sample consisted of 40 respondents, selected based on considerations of normal distribution and diversity of characteristics (Sugiyono, 2015).

Data Sources

This study used both quantitative data, which are numerical, and qualitative data, which are non-numerical. The primary data were collected directly from respondents using questionnaires designed based on the variables of interest.

Data Collection Method

The data were collected using a questionnaire method, which involves providing respondents with a set of questions to answer (Sugiyono, 2004). The questionnaire used in this study was modified from the research by Nurcahaya (2022) and had undergone validity and reliability testing, with results presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Validity Test Results.

Variable	Sub-Variable	Corrected Item–Total Correlation (r calculated)	r table	Remark
Travel Cost	X1.1	0.797	0,30	Valid
	X1.2	0.795	0,30	Valid
	X1.3	0.617	0,30	Valid
	X1.4	0.709	0,30	Valid
	X1.5	0.635	0,30	Valid
Facilities	X2.1	0.652	0,30	Valid
	X2.2	0.650	0,30	Valid
	X2.3	0.469	0,30	Valid
	X2.4	0.441	0,30	Valid
	X2.5	0.332	0,30	Valid
Distance	X3.1	0.395	0,30	Valid
	X3.2	0.796	0,30	Valid
	X3.3	0.870	0,30	Valid
	X3.4	0.803	0,30	Valid
	X3.5	0.833	0,30	Valid

Table 2. Reliability Test Results.

No	Variable	Crosbach's Alpha	Reliability Standard	Remark
1	Travel Cost	0,799	0,600	Reliable
2	Facilities	0,707	0,600	Reliable
3	Distance	0,757	0,600	Reliable
4	Tourist visits	0,800	0,600	Reliable

Data Analysis Method

This method was applied by calculating the travel cost incurred by a tourist to reach the destination (Setyawan et al., 2020). Travel costs were estimated using the formula proposed by Effendi (2015), as follows:

$$BPT = BTr + BD + (BKr - BKh) + L$$

where:

BPT = total travel cost (IDR/person/day)

BTr = transportation cost from the place of origin to the tourist destination (IDR/person)

BD = documentation cost (IDR/person)

BKr = food and beverage expenditure during recreation (IDR/person/day)

BKh = food and beverage expenditure without undertaking recreation (IDR/person/day)

L = other incidental costs (IDR/person/day)

The average travel cost per tourist was calculated using the formula proposed by Ekwarso (2010), as cited in Effendi (2015). The formula for estimating the average travel cost is as follows:

$$ATC = \sum_{i=0}^n \frac{BPT}{n}$$

where:

ATC = average travel cost

n = number of visitors interviewed

The average travel cost per zone was calculated using the formula proposed by Safitri (1996), as cited in Sihotang (2014):

$$ATCi = \sum_{i=0}^n \frac{BPTji}{N}i$$

where:

ATC_i = average travel cost from zone *i* (IDR/day/person)

BPT_{ji} = total travel cost of visitors to destination j from zone i (IDR/day/person)

N_i = total number of visitors from zone i (persons)

The Travel Cost Method (TCM) data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel software (Setyawan et al., 2020).

3. RESULT

Respondent Characteristics

The distribution of respondent characteristics in this study is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Respondent characteristics.

Variable	n	%
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	26	65,0
Female	14	35,0
<u>Age (Year)</u>		
>20 year	9	22,5
20-30 year	20	50,0
31-40 year	10	25,0
41-50 year	1	2,5
<u>Education Level</u>		
SMA	15	37,5
D3	1	2,5
D4	4	10
S1	15	37,5
S2	5	12,5
<u>Area of Origin</u>		
Ambon City	24	60,0
Outside Ambon City	16	40,0

Based on the results presented in Table 3, the majority of respondents were male, totaling 26 individuals (65.0%). Most respondents were aged 20–30 years, accounting for 20 individuals (50.0%). In terms of educational attainment, the most frequently observed levels were senior high school (SMA) and bachelor's degree (S1), each represented by 15 respondents (37.5%). With respect to the area of origin, most respondents came from Ambon City, totaling 24 individuals (60.0%).

The entrance fee to the Taeno Waterfall tourist area was IDR 5,000. Field observations indicated that several facilities were available at the Taeno Waterfall site, including: (1) Entrance ticket post, (2) Gazebo, (3) Restrooms.

Travel Distance of Tourists

The travel distance from the respondents' places of origin to Taeno Waterfall varied. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Respondents' travel distance.

Travel distance (km)	n	%
<5	0	0,0
5-10	6	15,0
11-20	15	37,5
21-30	3	7,5
>30	16	40,0

The results in Table 4 show that the largest proportion of respondents traveled more than 30 km, totaling 16 individuals (40.0%), while the smallest proportion traveled 21–30 km, consisting of 3 respondents (7.5%).

Economic Value

The results of the travel cost calculation for Taeno Waterfall are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Travel cost value of Taeno Waterfall.

Number of respondents	Average transportation cost (BTr)	Average documentation cost (BD)	Average consumption cost (BKr)	Total travel cost (BPT)
40	4.580.000	530.000	1.860.000	6.970.000

Based on the calculations presented in Table 3, the average total travel cost amounted to IDR 6,970,000. Accordingly, the economic value of the Taeno Waterfall tourism site, as estimated using the Travel Cost Method (TCM), was IDR 6,970,000.

The average travel cost per tourist was calculated using the formula proposed by Ekwarsa (2010), as cited in Effendi (2015). The formula used to estimate the average travel cost is as follows:

$$ATC = \sum_{i=0}^n \frac{BPT}{n}$$

Thus:

$$ATC = \frac{6.970.000}{40} = 174.250$$

Based on the calculation of the average travel cost using the formula proposed by Effendi (2015), the Average Travel Cost (ATC) was estimated at IDR 174,250. This value represents the average expenditure borne by each tourist to visit the site and includes estimated costs of transportation, consumption, entrance fees, and other relevant travel-related expenses. Accordingly, the ATC not only reflects tourists' ability and willingness to pay for recreational activities, but also serves as an important indicator for tourism demand analysis, economic

valuation of the site, and as a basis for destination managers and policymakers in formulating more efficient and sustainable tourism development strategies.

Factors Influencing Tourist Visits

Several factors were identified as influencing tourist visits to Taeno Waterfall:

Travel cost

Travel cost plays a significant role, as the level of expenditure borne by tourists—such as transportation, consumption, and other additional costs—determines destination affordability and influences the decision to visit.

Facilities

The availability and adequacy of facilities, including rest areas, toilets, trekking paths, and other supporting infrastructure, are key determinants of tourist satisfaction. Well-maintained and sufficient facilities enhance destination attractiveness and encourage repeat visits.

Accessibility

Accessibility, encompassing road conditions, availability of transportation, clarity of directional signage, and travel time to the site, strongly affects the ease with which tourists can reach the waterfall. Improved accessibility increases the potential number of visitors.

Comfort and quality of the tourism experience

Comfort and the overall quality of the tourism experience—such as environmental cleanliness, safety, natural authenticity, and the hospitality of local communities—also influence tourists' perceptions and satisfaction. Positive experiences strengthen the destination's image and increase future visitation intentions.

DISCUSSION

Entrance Fee

The entrance fee to the Taeno Waterfall tourist area, set at IDR 5,000, can be categorized as relatively affordable for a wide range of visitors, including both local residents and tourists from outside the region. At this minimal cost, visitors gain access to natural attractions such as a largely unspoiled waterfall, a cool microclimate, and an environment that remains relatively free from urban activities (Donargo, 2025). This pricing policy reflects the management's effort to provide inclusive access to tourism without imposing a significant financial burden, particularly on students, young people, and families with limited budgets. Moreover, a low entrance fee has the potential to increase visitation rates, which in turn may support the sustainable promotion of regional tourism.

On the other hand, the implementation of an entrance fee of IDR 5,000 also serves a strategic function in supporting the management and maintenance of the Taeno Waterfall tourist area. Revenue generated from ticket sales can be allocated to environmental cleanliness, maintenance and improvement of basic facilities such as footpaths, waste disposal sites, and resting areas, as well as to enhance visitor safety and comfort (Uhai et al., 2024).

Waterfall Facilities

Based on field observations, the Taeno Waterfall tourist area has been equipped with several basic facilities intended to support visitor activities and enhance overall comfort. The presence of an entrance ticket post functions as an initial point for visitor management, both in terms of collecting entrance fees and regulating visitor inflow and outflow (Page, 2014; Han et al., 2021). In addition, the ticket post serves an informative role by providing visitors with brief explanations regarding visitation rules, site conditions, and by contributing to the maintenance of order and security within the area (Kristiana et al., 2018). The availability of this facility enables a more structured management system and reflects the implementation of a functional, albeit still simple, tourism management approach.

Furthermore, gazebos within the Taeno Waterfall area serve as supporting facilities where visitors can rest, relax, and enjoy the surrounding natural scenery after engaging in activities en route to the waterfall. Gazebos also provide shelter from weather conditions such as heat and rain and can be used as gathering spaces for families or groups of tourists (Abidin et al., 2024). The availability of restroom facilities is another essential element in meeting visitors' basic needs during their stay. These facilities contribute significantly to visitor comfort and satisfaction, particularly for tourists traveling from relatively long distances.

Travel Distance of Tourists

Based on the data analysis presented in Table 3, the travel distance from respondents' places of origin to the Taeno Waterfall tourist area exhibited considerable variation. Respondents traveling more than 30 km constituted the largest group, with 16 individuals (40.0%). This finding indicates that Taeno Waterfall possesses a relatively strong attraction, enabling it to draw visitors from distant areas. The dominance of respondents traveling over 30 km suggests that the site is not only appealing to nearby communities but also to tourists from outside the immediate area who are willing to undertake longer journeys to experience its natural attractions.

In contrast, respondents traveling 21–30 km represented the smallest group, with only 3 individuals (7.5%). Meanwhile, 15 respondents (37.5%) traveled 11–20 km, and 6 respondents (15.0%) traveled 5–10 km. No respondents were recorded as traveling less than 5 km. This

pattern indicates that visitation from communities located very close to the Taeno Waterfall area is relatively low. Such conditions may be influenced by several factors, including local community habits, accessibility issues, or differences in perceptions and interest toward the tourism site.

Economic Value

Based on the calculations presented in Table 5, the total travel cost incurred by all respondents to visit the Taeno Waterfall tourist area amounted to IDR 6,970,000. This value represents the cumulative expenditure of visitors, including transportation costs, consumption during travel, entrance fees, and various other incidental expenses incurred during the tourism activity. The magnitude of this total travel cost indicates that visiting the Taeno Waterfall requires a certain level of financial commitment from tourists. Indirectly, this reflects the attractiveness and utility value of the site, as higher expenditures borne by visitors generally indicate greater perceived benefits and satisfaction.

Using the Travel Cost Method (TCM), the total travel cost of IDR 6,970,000 can be interpreted as the economic value of the Taeno Waterfall tourist area. TCM is an approach used to estimate the economic value of natural tourism resources based on the costs incurred by visitors to access the site (Hardiyanti & Subari, 2020). In this context, the estimated economic value reflects the indirect benefits generated by Taeno Waterfall as a natural tourism object, particularly its recreational value. This approach is especially relevant given that waterfall tourism sites do not have explicit market prices, making visitor expenditure behavior a suitable proxy for economic valuation.

To estimate the cost borne by individual tourists, the average travel cost was calculated using the formula proposed by Effendi (2015). This calculation divides the total travel cost by the number of visits or respondents, yielding the average cost incurred per tourist. The results indicate an Average Travel Cost (ATC) of IDR 174,250, representing the average expenditure per tourist for a single visit to the Taeno Waterfall tourist area.

An ATC value of IDR 174,250 reflects a relatively diverse expenditure structure that remains within an affordable range. This cost includes transportation expenses influenced by travel distance, consumption costs during the trip, relatively low entrance fees, and other additional expenditures. The ATC value also illustrates tourists' willingness to pay for the recreational experience offered by Taeno Waterfall. Thus, visitors perceive that the benefits and satisfaction derived from the visit are commensurate with the costs incurred.

Factors Influencing Tourist Visits

Tourist visitation to the Taeno Waterfall area is influenced by various interrelated factors, one of which is the availability of tourism facilities. Facilities are a crucial component in supporting tourism activities, as they are directly related to fulfilling visitors' basic needs during their stay. Facilities such as ticket posts, gazebos, and restrooms contribute to a sense of safety, comfort, and convenience for tourists. Adequate facilities not only enhance visitor satisfaction but also have the potential to extend the length of stay and encourage repeat visits. Conversely, limited or poorly maintained facilities may reduce tourist interest, even when the site possesses high natural attractiveness.

Another important factor influencing visitation levels is accessibility to the tourism site. Accessibility encompasses road conditions and quality, travel distance, availability of transportation, and the clarity of information and directional signage leading to the site. According to Mandaku et al. (2025), road conditions leading to Taeno Waterfall largely consist of dirt roads, some of which remain unpaved, making them difficult for vehicles to traverse, particularly during the rainy season. Inadequate road infrastructure hampers the mobility of both local communities and tourists. In addition, directional signage, information boards, and simple navigation systems to guide visitors safely and comfortably to the site are not yet available (Adhan & Suhab, 2025). These constraints constitute major barriers to the development of Taeno Waterfall as a viable and sustainable tourism destination.

Beyond facilities and accessibility, comfort and the quality of the tourism experience are also key determinants of tourists' decisions to visit Taeno Waterfall. Comfort is associated with environmental cleanliness, site safety, a conducive atmosphere, and the attitudes and hospitality of managers and surrounding communities (Sedana et al., 2026). Meanwhile, the quality of the tourism experience is influenced by the beauty and uniqueness of the waterfall's natural attractions, as well as the impressions formed during the visit. Positive tourism experiences foster favorable perceptions and lasting memories, encouraging word-of-mouth promotion and enhancing the overall image of the destination.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the calculations, the economic value of the Taeno Waterfall tourist area estimated using the Travel Cost Method (TCM) amounted to IDR 6,970,000, with an average travel cost per tourist of IDR 174,250. These findings indicate that Taeno Waterfall has significant potential as a natural tourism destination. Tourist visitation levels are influenced by

several factors, including the availability of facilities within the waterfall area, accessibility to the site, comfort, and the quality of the tourism experience obtained during visits.

The management of Taeno Waterfall should improve the quality of destination management by providing and maintaining tourism facilities, enhancing accessibility, and strengthening visitor comfort and safety. Essential facilities, including parking areas, toilets, waste bins, rest areas, information boards, and access trails to the waterfall, should be adequately provided and regularly maintained. Accessibility should also be improved by upgrading road conditions leading to the site, organizing pedestrian pathways, and installing clear directional signs and wayfinding information. These measures are expected to enhance the quality of visitors' experiences, encourage repeat visitation, and strengthen the appeal of Taeno Waterfall as a sustainable nature-based tourism destination.

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