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From Guided-Tour Priorities to Tourist Advocacy: Factors Associated with Value for Money and Intentions to Recommend in South Africa's Western Cape

Abstract. This exploratory study examines whether stated guided-tour priorities and tourist characteristics are associated with value-for-money evaluations and positive recommendations in South Africa's Western Cape, and whether value adds explanatory information to tourist advocacy. Survey data from 451 participants were analysed using descriptive statistics, bivariate tests, hierarchical binary logistic regression and robustness checks. Ratings of excellent value for money were associated with longer stays, degree education and travelling with friends or business partners. Intentions to recommend followed a different pattern, with stronger priorities for safety, ambience, multilingual capability, and smaller groups associated with higher odds of recommendation. Although adding value-for-money ratings improved the overall model fit, its category-level estimates were imprecise, indicating partial rather than complete value-advocacy alignment. Excellent value-for-money ratings were more closely associated with tourists' trip contexts, whereas intentions to recommend were more closely associated with stated priorities. The findings support a cautious decoupling between perceived value for money and intentions to recommend and suggest that operators should monitor both aspects as related but distinct outcomes.

Keywords: guided tours, perceived value for money, intention to recommend, destination advocacy, Western Cape

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1. Introduction

Guided tours occupy a distinctive position within destination experiences. They provide access to attractions, but they also interpret places, organise encounters and mediate the relationship between visitors and host communities. As a result, tour guides influence how tourists understand local history, evaluate service encounters and remember destinations after returning home. Their contribution extends beyond factual narration to include safety, coordination, responsiveness, cultural mediation and the creation of emotionally engaging experiences (Çetinkaya & Öter, 2016; Cheng et al., 2019; Kul et al., 2025). In destinations such as South Africa's Western Cape, where guided tours connect visitors with cultural heritage, natural landscapes, townships, wildlife and urban attractions, the quality of this mediation can affect both immediate evaluations and subsequent destination advocacy.

Ideally, a guided experience should deliver benefits that tourists regard as commensurate with the money, time and effort invested. Perceived value is not simply a judgement about price; it represents an overall assessment of what is received relative to what is sacrificed (Sánchez et al., 2006; Caber et al., 2020; Yacoub et al., 2025). A knowledgeable guide, coherent itinerary, safe environment and appropriate group size may strengthen this evaluation, whilst poor coordination, weak communication or failure to respond to individual needs can diminish it. Value is also socially and emotionally constituted. Tourists may consider an experience worthwhile because it creates enjoyment, learning, connection or memorable stories, even when its price is relatively high (Kim & Tang, 2020; Pujiastuti et al., 2022; Brochado et al., 2022).

For tour operators and destinations, however, favourable value perceptions are only part of the desired outcome. Stronger commercial and reputational benefits arise when tourists recommend their experiences to others. Recommendations reduce uncertainty for prospective travellers and can extend the influence of a guided tour far beyond the original encounter. Nowadays tourists make evaluations in conversations, online reviews and social media, turning individual experiences into publicly accessible market information (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Brochado et al., 2022; Qiu et al., 2024). A positive recommendation is therefore not merely another measure of satisfaction. It involves a willingness to attach one's credibility to the endorsed experience and may represent a more demanding behavioural threshold than judging a tour to be reasonably priced or satisfactory.

Much tourism research nevertheless treats perceived value, satisfaction, recommendations and loyalty as successive stages in a largely linear process. Experience quality is expected to increase perceived value, which improves satisfaction and

subsequently strengthens behavioural intentions (Chen & Chen, 2010; Wang et al., 2022; Qiu et al., 2024). This logic is plausible, but its apparent simplicity conceals several tensions. Different dimensions of value do not influence behavioural intentions uniformly, and their effects may vary across demographic groups and tourism settings (Caber et al., 2020; Brochado et al., 2022; Kul et al., 2025). Economic value may be sufficient for tourists to regard a purchase as acceptable, whilst emotional, social or epistemic value may be required before they recommend it enthusiastically. An experience can therefore be judged good value without becoming memorable or worth recommending.

Existing guided-tour studies show that tour guide competence, interpretation and service delivery are associated with satisfaction and post-visit intentions. Cheng et al. (2019), for example, found that perceived value mediated the relationship between interpretation and revisit intention. Kul et al. (2025) subsequently reported that tour guide competence conditioned relationships among tourists' value assessments, satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Research on memorable tourism experiences similarly links engagement, authenticity, knowledge and emotional involvement with recommendation and loyalty (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Pujiastuti et al., 2022; Brochado et al., 2022). These studies establish relationships among experience quality, value and behavioural intentions, but they generally model integrated sequences in specialised heritage or cultural settings. The available literature does not establish whether a global value-for-money judgement and a discrete recommendation intention have the same relations among participants in heterogeneous guided tours.

This omission matters in the Western Cape. Tour operators serve visitors from a diverse range of countries, with varying purposes, group arrangements, lengths of stay and accommodation choices. Standardised service prescriptions may therefore overlook variation in what tourists expect from guides and what induces them to recommend an experience. South African research has examined destination image, service quality and revisit intention, but comparatively little evidence identifies the attributes associated with value-for-money evaluations and recommendation among actual guided-tour participants (Matiza & Slabbert, 2020; Manyangara et al., 2023; Hill et al., 2022). Without such evidence, interventions may concentrate on price competitiveness whilst neglecting the interpretive, interpersonal and operational qualities that make tourists willing to recommend a tour.

Conceptually, the study draws on perceived value theory, expectation-confirmation theory and behavioural-intention research. Perceived value theory frames value as a comparison of benefits and sacrifices (Zeithaml, 1988), while expectation-confirmation theory distinguishes prior standards from experienced performance (Oliver, 1980). The questionnaire used in the survey measured the importance

tourists assigned to guided-tour features; it did not measure attribute performance or confirmation. Expectation-confirmation theory is therefore used as an interpretive lens for understanding stated standards, not as a directly tested process model. Behavioural-intention research provides a basis for examining whether favourable value and recommendation remain distinguishable outcomes (Chen & Chen, 2010; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Qiu et al., 2024).

Accordingly, this exploratory study examines which stated guided-tour priorities and tourist characteristics are associated with value-for-money evaluations and positive recommendations in the Western Cape. It compares the correlates of the two outcomes and assesses whether perceived value for money provides additional explanatory power for recommendations after accounting for visitor and trip characteristics. By distinguishing economic evaluation from reputational endorsement, the study evaluates whether the observed pattern is consistent with a provisional value-advocacy decoupling proposition.

The research questions are based on the proposed theoretical framework. No directional hypotheses are imposed because the study was not designed to measure experienced attribute performance or causal mechanisms.

The remainder of the article critically reviews scholarship on guided-tour experiences, perceived value and tourist advocacy before presenting the integrated theoretical framework. After reporting the research method and findings are then reported, the authors discuss the study's theoretical contribution, practical implications, limitations and directions for further research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Guided-Tour Experiences and the Formation of Tourist Evaluations

Guided-tour experiences are produced through an interaction among the tourist, the guide, the itinerary, other group members, and the physical and cultural setting. The guide is central to this process because the guide converts destination resources into intelligible and emotionally accessible experiences. Interpretation, interpersonal communication, punctuality, coordination, safety management, and responsiveness can therefore influence how tourists evaluate both the tour and the destination itself (Cheng et al., 2019; Al-Okaily, 2022; Kul et al., 2025). This intermediary role is particularly significant in culturally diverse destinations, where visitors may depend on guides to explain unfamiliar histories, social practices, and landscapes. Yet guided-tour research has often reduced this complex role to

a general measure of guide performance, obscuring which attributes protect value perceptions and which encourage tourists to recommend an experience.

Earlier research established a positive relationship between tour-guide performance and tourist satisfaction. Çetinkaya and Öter (2016), using survey responses from international tourists in Istanbul, found that guide performance was associated with satisfaction and revisit intention. Cheng et al. (2019) advanced this argument by demonstrating that the value tourists perceived in interpretation helped covert the appreciation of guiding services into revisit intention. Both studies positioned guides as contributors to post-consumption behaviour, but neither separated value-for-money judgements from recommendations. Their destination-specific samples also limit the extent to which the findings can be generalised to heterogeneous guided-tour settings where cultural, nature, adventure and urban experiences are consumed within the same region.

More recent scholarship has adopted broader conceptions of tour guide competence. Li et al. (2021) found that tourists' responses to guiding quality varied according to their capacity for empathy, suggesting that apparently objective service attributes are filtered through personal characteristics. Similarly, Al-Okaily (2022) treated performance as a multidimensional rather than a single technical competence. Kul et al. (2025), studying cultural tours in Cappadocia, found that guide competence moderated relationships among quality value, satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Notably, quality value did not independently improve overall satisfaction in every relationship tested. This qualification challenges the common assumption that improved guide performance produces uniformly favourable outcomes. Nevertheless, these studies predominantly employ structural models in specialised settings and generally combine recommendations, revisit intentions and loyalty within broader behavioural-intention constructs. Such an aggregation makes it difficult to determine whether guide-related priorities have distinctive associations with tourist advocacy.

Tourists also differ in what standards they regard as important. Some prioritise information and education, whereas others place greater importance on safety, ambience, small groups, multilingual communication or personal narration (Hill et al., 2022; Li et al., 2021; Paatlan & Gupta, 2023). Expectation-confirmation theory maintains that evaluations arise from comparisons between expected and experienced performance rather than performance alone (Oliver, 1980). According to research on memorable tourism experiences, knowledge, novelty, involvement, authenticity and emotional connection are associated with how experiences are recalled and communicated after travel (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Pujiastuti et al., 2022; Brochado et al., 2022). The present study did not observe that association because it measured stated priorities rather than experienced performance. Its

narrower contribution is to establish whether respondents who assign different importance to these features also differ in their value and recommendation outcomes.

2.2. Perceived Value and Value for Money

Perceived value is conventionally understood as an overall comparison between benefits received and sacrifices incurred (Zeithaml, 1988). Within tourism, such sacrifices include money, time, effort, uncertainty and opportunity costs, whilst the benefits may be functional, emotional, social or epistemic (Sánchez et al., 2006; Caber et al., 2020; Regalado-Pezúa et al., 2023). Value for money represents a relatively focused expression of this broader evaluation, but it should not be interpreted as price satisfaction alone. Visitors may regard a more expensive tour as good value when its interpretative quality, convenience, safety and capacity to foster emotional engagement offset the additional expense.

Empirical research generally supports a positive relationship between perceived value and favourable tourism outcomes, although the strength and composition of that relationship vary. Caber et al. (2020) examined youth tourism and found that functional and epistemic value were more prominent than social value, demonstrating that value dimensions are not equally relevant across markets. Brochado et al. (2022), using partial least squares modelling to analyse data from 1,003 Portuguese tourists, reported that memorable experiences strengthened several value dimensions, but recommendations were particularly associated with emotional and social value. Economic value was more influential among younger tourists, whilst quality value mattered more for other age groups. These results indicate that demographic heterogeneity can alter the value-behaviour relationship. They also caution against treating value as an undifferentiated construct.

Regalado-Pezúa et al. (2023) identified emotional and social, economic, and functional dimensions of perceived value in coastal destinations and linked them with satisfaction and loyalty. Qiu et al. (2024), analysing tourists at industrial heritage sites, likewise reported that perceived value enhanced satisfaction and loyalty. Both studies strengthen the argument that value is central to tourist evaluation, but their structural models largely assume that favourable value proceeds towards loyalty through predictable pathways. Cross-sectional data cannot establish the temporal or causal direction of these relationships, whilst latent constructs may conceal tourists who report high economic value but weak propensity to make recommendations. Yacoub et al. (2025) further show that value assessments are influenced by destination attributes and economic conditions, reinforcing the need to examine value within the specific service and destination environment in which it is formed.

A further limitation of previous research is its frequent treatment of value as a mediator rather than as a separate outcome requiring explanation. Studies commonly examine whether perceived value transmits the association of quality or experience with satisfaction and loyalty (Chen & Chen, 2010; Cheng et al., 2019; Pujiastuti et al., 2022). This evidence does not identify whether tourists who differ in their stated guided-tour priorities also differ in their likelihood of rating value as excellent, nor whether the same pattern applies to recommendations. The distinction has managerial relevance because a general quality-value relationship offers limited guidance on which tourist priorities distinguish favourable value-for-money evaluations from intentions to recommend.

2.3. From Favourable Evaluation to Tourist Advocacy

Positive recommendations are often incorporated into a composite measure of behavioural intention together with revisit intentions and willingness to repurchase. These behaviours are related but not equivalent. Revisiting requires an opportunity and desire to return, whilst an intention to recommend reflects tourists' willingness to endorse the experience to others. Destination advocacy therefore entails a degree of reputational commitment because an inappropriate recommendation may carry social costs for the advocate. Rasoolimanesh et al. (2021) linked memorable heritage experiences with behavioural intentions, whilst Xu et al. (2020) demonstrated that word of mouth can operate as part of the mechanism connecting destination image with subsequent intentions. These contributions establish recommendation as strategically significant, but they do not determine whether its antecedents are identical to those of value for money.

Service-quality research provides mixed evidence about this progression. Abdou et al. (2022) surveyed 380 yoga tourists in Egypt and found that perceived service quality affected behavioural intentions both directly and indirectly through satisfaction. The convenience sample and specialised pandemic-era context limit the generalisability of the findings, but the study demonstrates that tourists may respond to service quality without relying exclusively on evaluations. Kul et al. (2025) similarly found that guide competence altered some value-satisfaction relationships, whereas Brochado et al. (2022) showed that only particular value dimensions predicted recommendations. Collectively, these findings weaken the assumption that a single linear sequence adequately explains destination advocacy.

The literature also pays insufficient attention to uncertain respondents. Recommendation measures are often analysed as continuous scales or reduced to favourable averages, although being "not sure" differs from being unlikely to recommend. Uncertainty may reflect an experience that was adequate but insufficiently distinc-

tive to justify endorsement. Similarly, high levels of agreement that guides should be informative, punctual or responsive may indicate minimum expectations rather than attributes capable of generating recommendations. Failure to distinguish threshold requirements from differentiating attributes can lead operators to confuse the prevention of dissatisfaction with the creation of active recommendations.

2.4. Synthesis and Research Gap

The literature establishes three broad patterns: 1) guide competence is associated with tourist evaluation, 2) perceived value is multidimensional, and 3) favourable experiences tend to accompany stronger behavioural intentions (Caber et al., 2020; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Kul et al., 2025). What remains unresolved is more specific. Existing studies commonly aggregate recommendations with satisfaction, revisit intention or loyalty; consequently, it is unclear whether value for money and recommendation have the same correlates. Research has examined experienced quality more often than tourists' stated attribute priorities, leaving it uncertain whether priority profiles distinguish these outcomes. Visitor and trip characteristics are also frequently treated descriptively despite evidence of heterogeneous value relationships (Li et al., 2021; Brochado et al., 2022). Finally, there is limited evidence from heterogeneous South African guided tours, where a uniform value-to-advocacy sequence cannot be assumed (Hill et al., 2022; Matiza & Slabbert, 2020; Manyangara et al., 2023).

The present study addresses this narrower gap by analysing value for money and recommendations as separate outcomes among guided-tour participants in the Western Cape. It asks whether stated priorities and visitor or trip characteristics are associated differently with each outcome and whether value adds information to the recommendation model. The study is therefore explicitly exploratory as it estimates adjusted associations and evaluates the pattern against a provisional value-advocacy decoupling proposition rather than testing a causal sequence.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study uses perceived value theory, expectation-confirmation theory and the behavioural-intention perspective as complementary interpretive lenses. Perceived value concerns the balance between benefits and sacrifices, expectation-confirmation distinguishes standards from experienced performance, and behavioural intention concerns a person's willingness to act on an evaluation. Because the re-

ported dataset records stated attribute priorities rather than experienced performance or confirmation, the framework informs variable selection and interpretation; it is not tested as a causal process model.

Perceived value is the principal foundation. Tourists judge whether functional, emotional, social, and learning benefits justify the money, time, effort, and opportunity costs committed to a tour (Zeithaml, 1988; Sánchez et al., 2006; Caber et al., 2020). Value for money is therefore broader than price satisfaction and may depend on itinerary coherence, interpretation, safety, convenience and interaction. Because these benefits are experienced within particular journeys, visitor characteristics, travelling companions and length of stay may alter the benefit-sacrifice calculation.

Expectation-confirmation theory clarifies why stated priorities and experienced performance must not be conflated (Oliver, 1980). Informativeness, punctuality, coordination, responsiveness and guide competence may be widely held standards, but the present data cannot establish whether a tour met them. Near-universal endorsement can nevertheless identify priorities with little capacity to discriminate between respondents, while more variable priorities may distinguish subgroups. Evidence that tourism attributes have asymmetric associations with satisfaction provides a useful interpretive comparison (Yuan et al., 2018; Bi et al., 2020; Pan et al., 2022), but the present study does not estimate asymmetric performance effects.

The behavioural-intention perspective distinguishes a personal evaluation from an outward endorsement. Making a recommendation may require tourists to judge an experience as suitable for others and to stake their personal credibility on that judgement. It may therefore be associated with relational, emotional and risk-related priorities as well as economic value (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Brochado et al., 2022; Wang & Li, 2023). Whether such priorities actually produce recommendations cannot be determined from the cross-sectional data.

Together, these perspectives motivate a provisional value-advocacy decoupling proposition denoting that value for money and recommendations are related but analytically distinct post-experience outcomes, potentially displaying different correlates. The proposition is assessed through four research questions: (RQ1) Which stated guided-tour priorities and visitor or trip characteristics are associated with excellent value for money? (RQ2) Which guided-tour priorities and trip characteristics are associated with positive recommendations? (RQ3) To what extent do the correlates of the two outcomes differ? (RQ4) Does value for money provide additional explanatory power to the recommendation model after adjustment? These questions preserve the exploratory character of the analysis and avoid imposing post hoc directional hypotheses on measures not designed to test experienced quality or causal mechanisms.

4. Method

4.1. Research Design and Setting

A quantitative, cross-sectional secondary analysis was conducted using survey data from a larger mixed-methods investigation of critical success factors for guided tours in South Africa's Western Cape. Tourist respondents were asked about their experience priorities, value for money, and recommendations relating to cultural, heritage, nature, wildlife, coastal, township and urban tours in Cape Town and elsewhere in the province. The design identifies associations but cannot establish causality.

4.2. Sampling and Data Collection

The population comprised adult domestic and international tourists who had participated in a guided tour in the province. Trained fieldworkers used non-probability intercept sampling at tour locations, checking if prospective respondents met the eligibility criteria. The final sample comprised 451 respondents. Data were collected between April 2021 and October 2021 during the COVID-19 period when applicable distancing and sanitation measures were in effect, a contextual limitation considered in the interpretation of the findings.

4.3. Instrument and Variables

Given the mobility regulations in place during this period in South Africa, a self-administered online questionnaire was used to collect data on visitors' demographics and trip characteristics, perceived value for money, intention to recommend and 14 guided-tour priorities. The priorities included informativeness, safety, ambience, group size, personal narration, tour variety, punctuality, coordination, managerial skills, responsiveness, price, multilingual ability, guide behaviour and educational value. Each was rated on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). These items measured the importance or desirability respondents assigned to each feature; they did not measure how well a specific guide or tour performed. Because the items represented distinct requirements and did not support a reflective scale, they were analysed separately.

The primary binary outcomes were chosen to match two substantively defined thresholds. Excellent value for money was coded 1 and all lower responses (good, fair, poor or uncertain) were coded 0, distinguishing the highest evaluation from less-than-excellent value. Intention to recommend was coded 1 for extremely likely or likely and 0 for unlikely or uncertain. This yielded 270 excellent-value responses

and 337 intentions to recommend. Dichotomisation necessarily entails a loss of information and does not imply that respondents in the resulting categories are psychologically equivalent. This approach was used to estimate interpretable threshold probabilities and avoid unstable coefficients across very sparse categories; only 38 respondents reported fair, poor or uncertain value. To evaluate dependence on these coding decisions, robustness analyses used cumulative ordinal models after excluding uncertain responses and a stricter “extremely likely to recommend” outcome. Country of origin was recoded as domestic or international, while sparse demographic and trip categories were combined only where substantively comparable.

4.4. Data Analysis

Distributions of questionnaire variables were analysed using *SPSS*. Descriptive statistics were calculated for the sample, stated priorities and outcomes. Bivariate associations were assessed using Pearson’s chi-square tests, or exact probabilities for sparse cells, with Cramér’s *V* indicating magnitude. Hierarchical binary logistic regression was then applied to model excellent value and intention to recommend. Standardised priority items formed the first block; origin, gender, age, education, purpose, group composition, group size, stay duration and accommodation formed the adjusted block. The final recommendation model added categorical value for money to assess its incremental explanatory contribution.

Adjusted odds ratios (AORs), 95% confidence intervals (CIs), and *p*-values were reported. Multicollinearity was assessed using variance inflation factors (VIFs) and correlations among predictors. Model performance was evaluated using likelihood-ratio tests, Nagelkerke R^2 , classification accuracy, the area under the receiver operating curve (AUROC), and calibration. Robustness checks included modelling ‘extremely likely intention to recommend’ as the outcome and fitting cumulative ordinal models after excluding responses indicating uncertainty. Interpretation considered effect size, precision, and consistency across model specifications, alongside statistical significance at $p < .05$.

4.5. Ethical Consideration

The Cape Peninsula University of Technology’s Faculty of Business and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (FBMSREC) approved the original study on 2 March 2021 (Ethical Clearance Certificate Number: 2021_FBMSREC_004). Participation was voluntary and informed; withdrawal was permitted, and no identifying information was retained. The secondary analysis used de-identified data for objectives aligned with the approved project.

5. Findings

5.1. Guided-Tour Priorities, Value Assessments and Intentions To Recommend

Respondents expressed strong agreement with most proposed guided-tour priorities, although the degree of consensus varied considerably. Informativeness received the strongest endorsement, with 99.1% agreeing or strongly agreeing that guided tours must be informative. Punctuality, safety, educational value, guide behaviour and responsiveness were also endorsed by more than 95% of respondents. These proportions are consistent with widely shared service priorities, although the data do not establish whether the tours performed well on these attributes.

Table 1. Guided-tour experience priorities

Guided-tour priority	Mean	SD	Agree or strongly agree (%)
Informativeness	4.93	0.33	99.1
Punctuality	4.90	0.41	98.2
Educational function	4.88	0.43	97.6
Guide behavior and skills	4.83	0.51	96.2
Coordination	4.78	0.56	95.3
Responsiveness to tourist needs	4.75	0.56	95.1
Personal experiences of the guide	4.70	0.73	93.6
Managerial skills	4.57	0.78	87.8
Reasonable price	4.50	0.85	86.5
Ability to conduct different tour types	4.49	0.96	83.1
Safety	4.41	0.57	97.6
Ambience	4.30	0.68	91.6
Small group size	3.16	1.38	38.1
Multilingual capability	3.01	1.60	39.9

Note: Items were measured from 1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree.
Source: Authors' own work

Greater variation was observed for small group size and multilingual capability. Only 38.1% agreed that tours should be conducted in groups of no more than ten participants, whilst 39.9% agreed that guides should speak more than one language. The comparatively large standard deviations for these attributes indicate genuine preference heterogeneity. Personal narration, tour variety and reasonable pricing occupied an intermediate position as they were strongly endorsed overall but did not display the near-unanimity associated with informativeness and punctuality.

Most respondents evaluated the guided experience favourably. It was described as 'excellent value for money' by 270 respondents (59.9%), as 'good' by 143 (31.7%), as 'fair' by 29 (6.4%), as 'poor' by 7 (1.6%), and two respondents (0.4%) chose 'uncertain'. 132 respondents (29.3%) were extremely likely to recommend was also widespread, 205 (45.5%) were likely to provide a positive referral. The remaining respondents were either not likely (10.2%) or uncertain (15.1%). Thus, 91.6% evaluated value for money as excellent or good, whereas 74.7% expressed a clear intention to recommend. This difference provides initial evidence that favourable value does not invariably lead to advocacy.

Informativeness was excluded from the multivariable recommendation models because its endorsement was nearly universal, yielding sparse outcome-by-predictor cells and unstable estimates consistent with quasi-complete separation. The omission does not imply that informativeness is unimportant; it only indicates that this priority contained insufficient variation to discriminate reliably between outcome groups.

5.2. Factors Associated with Excellent Value for Money

The model including guided-tour priorities alone improved fit relative to the intercept-only model, likelihood-ratio $\chi^2(13) = 29.20$, $p = .006$, but showed modest overall performance (Nagelkerke $R^2 = .085$, AUC = .628). In unadjusted analyses, stronger endorsement of guides' personal experiences was positively associated with reporting excellent value, whereas stronger safety expectations were negatively associated with this outcome. Neither relationship remained statistically significant after adjustment for tourist and trip characteristics.

The adjusted value model provided a substantially better fit than the priorities-only model, likelihood-ratio change $\chi^2(22) = 69.19$, $p < .001$. As an indicator of model fit, the Nagelkerke pseudo- R^2 was .265 and the area under the receiver operating characteristic curve (AUC) of .757. After adjustment, no individual guided-tour priority was independently associated with reporting excellent value for money at $p < .05$. The association closest to conventional statistical significance concerned guides' personal experiences: a one-standard-deviation increase in endorsement was associated with 23% higher odds of reporting excellent value, although the confidence interval included the null value; adjusted odds ratio (AOR = 1.23, 95% CI [0.98, 1.54], $p = .071$).

Trip characteristics showed stronger independent associations with reporting excellent value than did the stated guided-tour priorities. Compared with tourists staying for 8–14 days, those staying for 1–3 days had 58% lower odds of reporting excellent value for money (AOR = 0.42, 95% CI [0.23, 0.79], $p = .007$). Visitors

staying for 4–7 days also had lower odds of reporting excellent value for money (AOR = 0.47, 95% CI [0.25, 0.85], $p = .013$). Compared with visitors travelling with family members, those travelling with friends had 71% higher odds of reporting excellent value for money (AOR = 1.71, 95% CI [1.03, 2.86], $p = .040$). Visitors travelling with business partners had higher odds still (AOR = 4.01, 95% CI [1.20, 13.38], $p = .024$, although this estimate was less precise, as indicated by its wider confidence interval.

Educational attainment also differentiated evaluations of value for money. Compared with respondents whose highest educational qualification was school education, degree holders had approximately 2.5 times the odds of reporting excellent value compared with respondents whose highest attainment was school education (AOR = 2.52, 95% CI [1.31, 4.86], $p = .006$). Domestic or international status, gender, age, accommodation and group size were not independently associated with reporting excellent value for money. Within the sample, excellent-value ratings were more clearly associated with stay duration, travelling companions and educational background than with any single stated tour priority.

Table 2. Principal predictors in the adjusted logistic regression models

Predictor	Excellent value AOR [95% CI]	Positive recommendation AOR [95% CI]
Safety priority, per SD	1.01 [0.77, 1.32]	1.99 [1.39, 2.86]***
Ambience priority, per SD	0.94 [0.74, 1.19]	1.62 [1.11, 2.35]*
Small-group priority, per SD	1.01 [0.77, 1.32]	1.43 [1.03, 1.99]*
Personal-experience priority, per SD	1.23 [0.98, 1.54]	1.02 [0.68, 1.52]
Multilingual priority, per SD	0.86 [0.67, 1.09]	1.57 [1.15, 2.14]**
Degree versus school education	2.52 [1.31, 4.86]**	1.05 [0.35, 3.19]
Friends versus family group	1.71 [1.03, 2.86]*	1.73 [0.91, 3.29]
Business partners versus family group	4.01 [1.20, 13.38]*	1.65 [0.30, 8.97]
Stay of 1–3 versus 8–14 days	0.42 [0.23, 0.79]**	1.05 [0.47, 2.35]
Stay of 4–7 versus 8–14 days	0.47 [0.25, 0.85]*	0.62 [0.31, 1.27]

Note: AOR = Adjusted Odds Ratio; CI = Confidence Interval; SD = Standard Deviation. Both models controlled for all retained guided-tour priorities, market, gender, age, education, purpose, group composition, group size, length of stay, and accommodation. The recommendation model additionally controlled for value for money. ($p < .05$), (** $p < .01$), (***) $p < .001$).

Source: Authors' own work

5.3. Factors Associated with Intention to Recommend

The baseline, priorities-only recommendation-intention model was statistically significant, likelihood-ratio $\chi^2(13) = 99.77$, $p < .001$, with Nagelkerke pseudo- R^2 of 29.3% and AUC of .795. The addition of tourist and trip characteristics failed

to provide a significant block-level improvement, $\chi^2(22) = 29.78$, $p = .124$, despite a nominal increase in AUC to .831 (Nagelkerke pseudo- $R^2 = .369$). Conversely, adding value-for-money ratings produced a statistically significant improvement in model fit [$\chi^2(2) = 6.78$, $p = .034$], with Nagelkerke pseudo- $R^2 = .385$ and AUC at .837. These results indicate that while demographic traits do not reliably boost prediction, individual ratings of value for money provide a statistically meaningful contribution to explaining recommendation intentions.

Four stated priorities were independently associated with a positive intention to recommend the guided experience. A one-standard-deviation increase in endorsement of safety was associated with almost twice the odds of a recommendation intention (AOR = 1.99, 95% CI [1.39, 2.86], $p < .001$). Stronger endorsement of ambience was associated with 62% higher odds (AOR = 1.62, 95% CI [1.11, 2.35], $p = .012$), while multilingual capability was associated with 57% higher odds (AOR = 1.57, 95% CI [1.15, 2.14], $p = .005$). A stronger preference for a small group was also associated with higher odds (AOR = 1.43, 95% CI [1.03, 1.99], $p = .033$). These estimates reflect differences between respondents' priorities, rather than the experienced performance of the tour on these attributes.

These associations differed from those observed for excellent value for money. Safety, ambience, multilingual capability and preference for small groups were not independently associated with reporting excellent value for money, but were independently associated with intention to recommend. One possible interpretation is that people who prioritise risk reduction, communication access or interpersonal conditions also evaluate endorsement differently; however, vulnerability, interpersonal access and perceived atmosphere were not measured as mechanisms. Most sociodemographic characteristics were not independently associated with the intention to recommend. Compared with leisure tourists, respondents travelling for purposes classified as "other" had lower odds of intending to recommend the guided experience (AOR = 0.33, 95% CI [0.11, 0.99], $p = .049$). However, this small, heterogeneous residual category should be interpreted cautiously.

5.4. The Value-Advocacy Relationship

Value for money and intention to recommend were associated in the bivariate analysis, $\chi^2(2) = 10.35$, $p = .006$, although the association was small (Cramér's $V = .151$). However, the pattern was non-monotonic: a recommendation intention was reported by 77.0% of respondents who rated value for money as excellent and 66.4% of those who rated it as good, but by 89.5% of those giving a fair, poor, or uncertain assessment. The latter category contained only 38 respondents, so its high recommendation rate should not be treated as a stable population estimate.

Adding value-for-money ratings significantly improved the fit of the adjusted recommendation model, likelihood-ratio change $\chi^2(2) = 8.05$, $p = .018$. However, relative to the combined fair/poor/uncertain category, neither an excellent value-for-money rating (AOR = 2.40, 95% CI [.59, 9.71], $p = .219$) nor a good rating (AOR = 1.07, 95% CI [.26, 4.34], $p = .928$) was independently associated with intention to recommend. The wide confidence intervals reflect imprecision associated with the small reference category and should be interpreted in light of the non-monotonic descriptive pattern.

Using the stricter outcome of being extremely likely to recommend, several stated priorities remained independently associated with strong recommendation intention: safety, small-group preference, personal narration, multilingual capability, ambience and reasonable pricing. Excellent value for money was also positively associated with this stricter outcome after adjustment, although estimates were sensitive to the small reference group. Ordinal models that excluded uncertain responses led to the same broad conclusion, indicating that the results were not solely an artefact of the primary binary coding. Taken together, these robustness checks support partial rather than complete alignment between value-for-money evaluations and recommendation intentions, while recognising the information loss inherent in dichotomising the primary outcome.

6. Discussion

6.1. Value for Money as a Contextual Evaluation

The findings complicate the assumption that favourable value-for-money assessments are associated primarily with tourists' stated service priorities (Yacoub et al., 2025). Although the guided-tour priorities were jointly associated with reporting excellent value for money in the initial model, none remained independently associated after adjustment for visitor and trip characteristics. Length of stay, travel-group composition and education provided the clearest differentiation. Because the study measured stated importance of tour attributes rather than their experienced performance, this pattern cannot establish that guide conduct, safety or interpretation did not contribute to perceptions of value for money. Rather, it indicates that respondents' relative emphasis on these features did not independently distinguish reporting excellent value after adjustment for visitor and trip characteristics.

Perceived value theory treats value as a comparison between benefits and sacrifices, which can extend beyond the tour itself (Zeithaml, 1988; Sánchez et al.,

2006; Yacoub et al., 2025). Visitors staying 8–14 days may spread transport, planning and accommodation costs across more experiences, become more familiar with the destination or include the tour into a broader itinerary. Short-stay visitors may face tighter schedules and higher opportunity costs (Oklevik et al., 2021). These explanations are theoretically plausible, but the underlying allocation of costs, familiarity and opportunity costs was not measured and is an aspect worth investigating in future research.

The higher adjusted odds of reporting excellent value for money among respondents travelling with friends or business partners suggest that travel-group context may merit closer examination. Social interaction may amplify enjoyment or facilitate shared interpretation (Delgado et al., 2023), which is consistent with multidimensional accounts of tourism value (Caber et al., 2020; Brochado et al., 2022; Regalado-Pezúa et al., 2023). The models analysed in the study did not measure such processes, so co-production remains an interpretation rather than an established mechanism. The estimate for business partners was also imprecise, as indicated by its wide confidence interval.

Degree holders had higher adjusted odds of reporting excellent value for money than respondents than those whose highest qualification was school education. One possible explanation is a greater inclination to engage with interpretive content, which is consistent with research treating knowledge and learning as components of memorable tourism experiences (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Pujiastuti et al., 2022; Qiu et al., 2024). However, the survey did not measure interpretive engagement, and the association should not be construed as evidence of a deficit among visitors with less formal education. Future research should test whether interpretive formats, prior knowledge or educational interests account for the association.

The near-universal endorsement of informativeness, punctuality, guide behaviour and educational value is consistent with — although it does not establish — their interpretation as threshold priorities. Asymmetric attribute theory proposes that the absence of basic features can produce dissatisfaction without their presence necessarily elevating an experience to excellent (Yuan et al., 2018; Bi et al., 2020; Pan et al., 2022). Because performance and dissatisfaction were not measured in this study, future expectation–performance designs are needed to test whether these priorities operate as threshold attributes.

6.2. Intention to Recommend as an Interactional and Risk-Sensitive Judgement

Intention to recommend was associated with a different set of stated priorities. After adjustment for visitor characteristics, trip characteristics, and value-for-money

assessments, safety, ambience, preference for small groups, and multilingual capability were independently associated with intention to recommend. The pattern is consistent with recommendation intention being analytically distinct from perceived value for money; however, it does not establish that improving these tour attributes would increase recommendation intentions.

Among the stated priorities, safety had the largest estimated adjusted association with intention to recommend. In a guided-tour setting, safety can have functional and psychological significance and may be interpreted as a signal of organisational competence or capacity to manage uncertainty (Engström & Gorenak, 2026). These mechanisms were not measured in the survey. They are offered as theoretically grounded explanations for future testing, not as direct findings of the present analysis.

Ambience and small-group preference may relate to the social architecture of guided experiences. Smaller groups can facilitate communication and questions, while ambience may involve comfort, atmosphere and interaction. Their associations with intention to recommend are consistent with research linking emotional and social value to behavioural intentions (Brochado et al., 2022; Regalado-Pezúa et al., 2023; Croitoru et al., 2024). Because the questionnaire items captured respondents' stated priorities rather than their actual experience of group interaction or atmosphere, the present study identifies associations with stated priorities rather than the effects of experienced tour performance.

The same pattern can be observed for multilingual capability: respondents who attached more importance to this aspect had higher adjusted odds of intending to recommend the guided experience, but multilingual capability was not independently associated with excellent value for money. Linguistic adaptability may signal inclusion or reduce anticipated communication barriers, although neither mechanism was measured. The result therefore identifies an association between the stated importance of multilingual capability and intention to recommend; it does not show that multilingual service performance itself increased recommendation intentions.

Country of origin was not independently associated with either outcome after adjustment. In this sample, domestic or international status appeared less informative than direct measures of stay duration, group arrangements and stated priorities. However, this finding does not identify the unmeasured conditions that may shape recommendation intentions, nor does it establish that nationality is irrelevant in other tourism settings.

6.3. Reconsidering the Value-To-Advocacy Sequence

The non-monotonic relationship between value for money and recommendation intentions is the study's most consequential descriptive pattern. Conventional models generally position perceived value as an antecedent of satisfaction and loyalty (Chen & Chen, 2010; Mengkebayaer et al., 2022; Wang & Li, 2023). Adding value-for-money ratings improved the overall fit of the recommendation-intention model, but the category-specific estimates for excellent and good value for money were imprecise, and recommendation intentions were also common in the small, combined fair/poor/uncertain category. The cross-sectional design cannot establish whether perceptions of value for money preceded, followed, or developed alongside intention to recommend.

Several explanations merit future investigation. Intention to recommend may reflect experiential, social, and symbolic considerations that are not fully captured by a global value-for-money item; for example, a tour could be meaningful but expensive, or economical but insufficiently distinctive to be worth recommending. This interpretation is consistent with research in which emotional and experiential value are associated more strongly with loyalty than price value (Brochado et al., 2022; Kul et al., 2025; Qiu et al., 2024), but the present dataset cannot distinguish among those value dimensions.

The outcomes may also involve different evaluative thresholds. Value for money ratings reflect whether the exchange was worthwhile for the respondent, whereas intention to recommend reflects to what extent the experience is judged suitable for others. Perceived risk, social responsibility or uncertainty could contribute to that distinction, but these constructs were not directly measured. They should therefore be treated as hypotheses for future work rather than verified mechanisms.

Thirdly, the small number of respondents in the combined fair/poor/uncertain category limits the stability of the apparent reversal in recommendation intentions. Its high rate of intention to recommend should not be interpreted as evidence that low perceived value for money contribute to stronger recommendation intentions. Rather, the pattern indicates that value-for-money categories did not map neatly onto recommendation-intention categories in this sample. The stricter analysis, using being extremely likely to recommend as the outcome, provided somewhat stronger evidence of an association with excellent value for money and identified associations with safety, personal narration, small groups, multilingual capability, ambience and reasonable pricing. These findings should be replicated in larger samples with sufficient numbers in each category and using the full ordinal outcome scale.

Overall, the findings do not support a simple, fully aligned relationship between perceived value for money and intention to recommend in this sample. Value for money provided additional explanatory power to the recommendation-intention model, but the outcomes displayed partly different correlates. The apparent decoupling between perceived value for money and recommendation intention is offered only as a provisional interpretation, requiring replication with longitudinal data and direct measures of experienced performance, value dimensions and proposed mechanisms.

7. Theoretical Contribution

This study questions the treatment of perceived value for money and intention to recommend the guided experience as interchangeable expressions of one favourable evaluation. Value-for-money ratings improved the overall fit for the model of intention to recommend, but category-specific estimates were imprecise and the standard and extremely-likely-to-recommend outcomes had different correlates. Excellent value-for-money ratings were associated mainly with stay duration, group composition and education, while intention to recommend was associated with stronger priorities for safety, ambience, multilingual capability and smaller groups.

The study makes a provisional theoretical contribution by proposing that perceived value for money and intention to recommend may not be fully aligned. It conceptualises value for money as a personal benefit-sacrifice assessment and intention to recommend as an outward endorsement. The observed pattern is consistent with these outcomes having partly distinct evaluative bases, but the study does not directly test reputational responsibility or the mechanisms through which one judgement may inform the other.

The findings also suggest two distinctions for future research. First, the benefit-sacrifice judgement may be conditioned by temporal, social and interpretive contexts (Caber et al., 2020; Regalado-Pezúa et al., 2023; Yacoub et al., 2025). Second, near-universal priorities may function differently from more heterogeneous priorities. The present importance-only measures cannot establish threshold performance effects or advocacy-enabling mechanisms; paired expectation-performance data are required to test those interpretations (Yuan et al., 2018; Bi et al., 2020; Pan et al., 2022).

Methodologically, modelling intention to recommend separately from value, satisfaction and revisit intention demonstrates the analytical benefit of disaggre-

gating behavioural outcomes (Abdou et al., 2022; Brochado et al., 2022; Wang & Li, 2023). The contribution is therefore conditional and exploratory: trip circumstances and stated priorities were associated with value-for-money ratings and intention to recommend in partly different ways, while value-for-money ratings retained a limited overall relationship with intention to recommend.

8. Practical Implications

Tour operators should measure value for money and intentions to recommend separately because a high value rating does not necessarily coincide with the willingness to recommend the experience. The findings identify market segments defined by stated priorities; they do not show that changing attribute performance will lead to recommendations. Operational recommendations should therefore be piloted and evaluated rather than treated as proven interventions.

Product design may use travel context as a segmentation cue. Survey respondents staying fewer than eight days were less likely to report excellent value for money, while group composition was also associated with the outcome. Operators could test concise itineraries, transparent inclusions and flexible pacing for relevant segments, but the present observational associations do not establish that these changes will improve value-for-money ratings.

The results regarding recommendation intentions justify testing differentiated products and communications around safety, ambience, language support and group format among tourists who prioritise these features. Possible options include clear safety information, several group-size formats, language-specific guide matching and translated materials. Their performance effects should be evaluated through post-tour measures or field experiments before broad implementation.

Guide-training institutions may retain informativeness, punctuality, coordination and professional conduct as core competencies while evaluating advanced training in intercultural communication, adaptive interpretation and group management. The priority data indicate that tourists value these domains; they do not assess guides' current competence.

Destination organisations could supplement satisfaction metrics with separate value-for-money and referral indicators and segment visitors by stay duration, purpose, companions, language priorities and desired interaction. Because domestic or international status was not independently associated with either outcome in this sample, nationality should not be used as the sole basis for segmentation.

9. Conclusion

This exploratory study examined factors associated with excellent value for money and intention to recommend among 451 guided-tour participants in South Africa's Western Cape. The outcomes were not fully aligned. Excellent value for money was associated mainly with trip context, including stay duration, educational attainment and travelling companions whereas intention to recommend was associated with stronger stated priorities concerning safety, ambience, multilingual capability and smaller groups.

The study proposes a provisional decoupling between perceived value for money and recommendation intentions suggesting that assessments of the former and visitors' willingness to recommend the experience may have partly distinct evaluative bases. The cross-sectional associations do not establish a causal sequence or directly verify mechanisms involving vulnerability, inclusion, atmosphere, interpersonal access or reputational responsibility.

The results suggest that value for money and intentions to recommend should be measured separately using priority profiles and trip context to design testable market segments. Operators, training institutions and destination organisations should evaluate any changes to safety communication, group formats, language support or interpretation with direct performance measures rather than assuming causal effects from the present findings.

The cross-sectional design of the study does not establish causality, and structured non-probability intercept sampling limits statistical generalisation. The COVID-19-period conditions may have intensified safety concerns. Most importantly, the questionnaire measured attribute importance rather than experienced performance or expectation confirmation; the models therefore identify associations between respondents' priorities and outcomes, not effects of actual tour quality. Dichotomisation simplified meaningful thresholds but resulted in the loss of information by combining different response states, although ordinal and stricter-outcome analyses provided partial robustness checks. Several priorities displayed ceiling effects, and sparsely populated lower-value categories widened confidence intervals. Future research should therefore collect data on visitors' expectations before tours and their evaluations of performance on specific attributes afterwards, model the full ordinal outcomes using data from larger samples, measure proposed mechanisms, such as perceived risk and interpersonal access, track actual referrals longitudinally and test the decoupling proposition across provinces and tour types. Experimental or quasi-experimental studies could then determine whether changes in group size, interpretive style, multilingual provision or visible safety practices alter recommendations.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Ethics Statement

All procedures of the conducted study were in accordance with the ethical standards of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology's Faculty of Business and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (FBMSREC) — Ethical Clearance Certificate No. 2021_FBMSREC_004 and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards

Informed Consent

Written informed consent was obtained from all the tourists who participated in the study before they completed the research questionnaires.

Data Availability

Data are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

AI Use Declaration

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors utilised Grammarly to improve the linguistic quality and flow of the text. Following this process, the authors critically reviewed, revised, and validated all generated content. The authors remain fully accountable for the accuracy, academic integrity, and final version of the work.

CRedit Authorship Contribution Statement

GM: conceptualization, Formal analysis, investigation, methodology, Validation, Visualization, Writing — original draft, Writing — review & editing; **HB:** investigation, methodology, Validation, Visualization, Writing — review & editing; **KH:** investigation, methodology, Validation, Visualization, Writing — review & editing.

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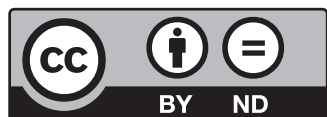
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Czynniki wpływające na stosunek jakości do ceny i chęć rekomendowania wycieczek z przewodnikiem w RPA

Streszczenie. Celem badania było sprawdzenie, czy deklarowane przez turystów priorytety dotyczące wycieczek z przewodnikiem oraz ich cechy demograficzne są powiązane z wyrażanymi przez nich ocenami stosunku jakości do ceny i zamiarem wystawienia rekomendacji, a także czy oceny te stanowią dodatkowe informacje wyjaśniające chęć rekomendowania danej wycieczki. Analiza została przeprowadzona na podstawie danych z ankiety internetowej z udziałem 451 respondentów, którzy uczestniczyli w co najmniej jednej wycieczce z przewodnikiem na terenie Prowincji Przylądkowej Zachodniej w RPA. Uzyskane dane zostały przeanalizowane z wykorzystaniem statystyk opisowych, analizy dwuwymiarowej, hierarchicznej binarnej regresji logistycznej i testów odporności. Oceny doskonałego stosunku jakości do ceny były powiązane z dłuższymi pobytami, wyższym wykształceniem i podróżami w towarzystwie znajomych lub partnerów biznesowych. Natomiast prawdopodobieństwo rekomendacji odbytej wycieczki było większe wśród respondentów, dla których bardziej liczyły się takie aspekty jak bezpieczeństwo, atmosfera, znajomość innych języków przez przewodnika i mniejsza liczba osób w grupie. Chociaż uwzględnienie ocen stosunku jakości do ceny poprawiło ogólne dopasowanie modelu, uzyskane szacunki dla poszczególnych kategorii były nieprecyzyjne, co wskazuje, że związek między tą zmienną a zamiarem rekomendacji jest tylko częściowy. Oceny stosunku jakości do ceny były ściślej powiązane z kontekstem podróży, natomiast intencje rekomendacji były ściślej powiązane z deklarowanymi priorytetami. Wyniki sugerują, że obie zmienne są do pewnego stopnia niezależne, co oznacza, że pomimo ich pokrewnego charakteru, operatorzy wycieczek powinni monitorować je osobno.

Słowa kluczowe: wycieczki z przewodnikiem, stosunek jakości do ceny, zamiar wystawienia rekomendacji, promocja destynacji, Prowincja Przylądkowa Zachodnia



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