

## Critical Success Factors for Guided Tours in the Western Cape Province of South Africa

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### Abstract

This study considers tourists' perspectives on the Critical Success Factors for guided tours in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. Guided tours and tourism destinations are inseparable, with such guided tours often being sought after for their power to improve tourist satisfaction and envisioned to enhance visitors' experience and impact tourism growth at destinations. The success of such guided tours is often premised on several factors, which when present, would influence visitors' propensity to recommend, revisit and make future destination choices. Such factors play a critical role in determining whether visitors would consider guided or self-led excursions. Understanding the Critical Success Factors for guided tours is essential as it makes it easier for tourism suppliers to channel efforts toward tourist satisfaction. Using a structured questionnaire, 451 tourists participating in guided tours in the Western Cape Province of South Africa were surveyed to ascertain the Critical Success Factors for guided tours. The study revealed that safety, knowledgeable guides, and pricing remain critical in the success of guided tours. The study highlights the critical factors considered essential for the success of guided excursions and the areas that require improvement. Following an analysis of the study's findings, recommendations for effective guided tours for the tourism industry were proposed.

**Keywords:** Critical success factors; guided tours; tourist satisfaction; Western Cape Province; South Africa

### Introduction

Guided tours are found in most destinations where tourist activities occur. These types of tours are seen as the herding of people into tour groups and providing them with memorable experiences (Marais et al., 2017). Despite their important role in making visitors appreciate the destination in different and enriching ways, guided tours have often been criticised as choreographed actions and for this, many have stereotyped them (Zillinger et al., 2012). Tourists visiting new places usually find comfort when accompanied by knowledgeable individuals who understand the destination (Nilsson & Zillinger, 2020). On a global scale, studies on tourist guiding in different contexts have been in existence since the 1970s (Boorstin, 1977; Cohen, 1985; Holloway, 1981; Schmidt, 1979). More recently, researchers have

examined guided tours in tourism in a more general context and the factors that are important for success (Atsız et al., 2022; Magangqaza et al., 2022; McNicol & Rettie, 2018; Nilsson & Zillinger, 2020). In tourism scholarship, research on guided tours, particularly in the South African context, has not received much attention. Furthermore, empirical studies on the factors that make guided tours successful are still emerging with most studies focusing on success factors for the various aspects of the travel and tourism industry (Baipai et al., 2021; Jaafar, 2011; Mutana & Mukwada, 2020). This study, therefore, seeks to establish the Critical Success Factors (CSFs) for guided tours in the Western Cape Province of South Africa to add to the body of knowledge on this understudied phenomenon and suggest ways of making such tours more effective. Knowledge about CSFs for guided tours is crucial, especially for tourist guides as it pinpoints aspects of focus for the success of guided excursions.

Tourist guides are important stakeholders in the travel and tourism industry and their role to provide insights into a destination and its attractions is invaluable. Through the knowledge and experience of tour guides, visiting destinations is often transformed. Tourist guides present the cultural and traditional aspects of a tourist destination to visitors and information related to the laws, rules and regulations that should be observed (Sandaruwani & Gnanapala, 2016). Awareness of the CSFs involved in such endeavours has become key to gaining an enhanced understanding of the factors influencing the decision to embark upon such tours (Magangqaza et al., 2022; Marais et al., 2017).

Providing a satisfying travel experience to visitors can be considered a determining factor in a travel operation's success, as it also affects the destination's image, tourist behaviour, and loyalty (Kamel, 2021). The theoretical underpinnings of this study are derived from a literature review of scholarly work on guided tours, particularly concerning CSFs. The following section reviews relevant literature on guided tours together with the theories which help to provide an understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

## Literature review

Tourist guiding is one of the oldest human occupations, dating back thousands of years. People have been travelling the world from time immemorial, with early historical accounts describing those who led the way as pathfinders and pioneers of the tour guiding profession (Cohen, 1985). Over at least two and a half millennia, tourist guides have evolved to become an integral part of the travel industry (Çetinkaya & Öter, 2016). While guides have existed for a lengthy period of time, their role is increasingly gaining importance since the emergence of mass tourism (Baipai et al., 2021; Kamel, 2021). Today, organised tourism is nearly impossible to achieve, especially without assistance from tour guides and other travel professionals such as tour managers and travel agency support staff (Magangqaza et al., 2022).

To better understand the concept of tour guiding, it is critical to first gain an understanding of its meaning. There are several definitions for tour/tourist guides from numerous organisations. According to the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA, 2022), a tour guide is someone who guides visitors in their preferred language and interprets an area's cultural and natural heritage. Such a guide receives area-specific training and is certified to conduct tour guiding activities by a recognised and appropriate authority (WFTGA, 2022). According to the Gauteng Guides Association (GGA), tourist guides are ambassadors of the country, with the primary responsibility of enhancing visitors' experiences (GGA, n.d). In addition, tourist guides introduce the country and its attractions (including the provision of accurate information) to visitors, and this is undertaken in the best possible way to assist them during their tours (South Africa, 2014). Tourist guides also assist in facilitating travel (including meet, greet and bid farewell) at the destination (Rabotić, 2008). According to the International Association of Tour Managers (IATM), tourist guides serve as a link between

tourists and the visited area. In this area, usually referred to as the social environment tourist guides help to facilitate transport arrangements, interpret and resolve emerging issues, as well as help, protect visitors from any difficulties (IATM, 2015). In undertaking these responsibilities, tour guides seek to ensure an environment of safety and security for visitors since this can influence destination choices and the overall success of the tourism industry (Rahman et al., 2021). Tourist guides are often thought of as 'intermediaries' between tourists and the 'unknown' social environment they are visiting or exploring (Zhang & Chow, 2004).

Tourist guiding entails several elements which are embedded in the definition of a tour guide, and these can influence the experience of individuals or groups opting for guided tours. A tour guide can be seen as a leader, someone with the ability to assume responsibility as well as giving information, thus acting as a 'fountain of knowledge' (Çetinkaya & Öter, 2016; Sandaruwani & Gnanapala, 2016). In addition, a tourist guide undertakes the role of a teacher or adviser and therefore plays a mentorship role (Shatnawi, 2019). A tour guide also plays a mediatory role whereby cultural exchange between visitors and host is facilitated (Kamel, 2021). In facilitating cultural exchange, tourist guides can be described as educators who assist visitors to understand the visited places (Shatnawi, 2019). It is crucial that visitors understand what they are experiencing (Saayman, 2013; Siriphanich & Tasanameelarp, 2017), for example, getting detailed explanations on various topics including culture, society, economy, politics, general knowledge, religion, health, and education. It is the guide's role to ensure that visitors get information on the above topics as well as act as ambassadors of the destination, who through the way they conduct their business, would encourage repeat visitation, and positive word of mouth referrals (Saayman, 2013). A tourist guide also plays a critical role in creating a comfortable environment for visitors and can influence tourists' overall experiences (Alexiou, 2018; Hwang & Lee, 2019; Sandaruwani & Gnanapala, 2016). According to Tosun and Temizkan (2004), tour guides are entrusted with important roles and obligations within the tourism industry. A tour guide's work entails not only providing information but also presenting that information in an engaging and authentic manner (Ap & Wong, 2001). Additionally, tour guides perform a critical and diagnostic role in ensuring that tourists are satisfied with the tour company used and the overall travel experience (Çetinkaya & Öter, 2016; Hwang & Lee, 2019).

Several factors play a critical role in making a travel experience exciting, usually leading to repeat visits where people would rather opt for guided excursions and tours than self-guided ones. One of these factors is the guide's attributes, including the skills possessed (Kassawnh et al., 2019). A knowledgeable tour guide is a critical asset to any tourism business (Chilembwe & Mweiwa, 2014; de Lima, 2016; Seyitoğlu, 2020a). Baldigara and Mamula (2012) note that the behavioural and cognitive development skills of a tourist guide are crucial to achieving a high degree of visitor satisfaction. The competitiveness of the tourism sector is enhanced when knowledgeable and skilled guides are involved, thus leading to positive recommendations that encourage more visitors to the destination (Kassawnh et al., 2019). Tour guides are responsible for providing travellers with information about the various tourist attractions (Seyitoğlu, 2020b), which necessitates a thorough understanding of the destination. Tourists on a guided tour get to understand various elements of the destination such as its heritage, history, and various cultural aspects (art and craft, language) which help to enhance the tourist experience, especially since tourists may travel to learn about the destination that they visit (Constantin et al., 2021). Therefore, the tour guide must be familiar with the general culture, habits, and traditions of diverse peoples to enhance the tourists' experiences. The nature of the interaction between visitors and tour guides is critical in the tour guiding business. Tourists usually put trust in their tour guides because of their responsibility in taking control

of individuals and groups. This trust leads to the development of a personal relationship, which the tour guide is seeking to cultivate during the tour programme.

One aspect that is critical in the tourism industry is that of service quality which is determined by the elements of service delivery such as staff friendliness, efficiency, reliability and staff competency. As such, service quality in tourism entails the interaction of tourist guides with the service delivery procedures in different settings such as accommodation, leisure facilities, restaurants and on transport modes. Tour guides, in this sense, operate as moderators for tourists, travel agencies and the local community surrounding sightseeing locations or tourist attractions. The quality of a tour guide's service is thus a significant success factor in the tourism sector. Tourists can not only identify the level of service provided by tour guides, but tour guides can also have an impact on their entire perception of travel firms. Tour guides' service quality standards can be measured by a comparison of the gap between their clients' expectations and their actual sentiments as perceived by the visitors themselves. In the tourism industry, it is widely assumed that good service quality and satisfaction contribute to positive referrals, favourable word-of-mouth referrals, and return visitation, all of which affect the success of tourism businesses (Žabkar et al., 2010).

In certain circumstances, tour guides' jobs entail selling intangible items to tourists, such as expertise, services, and travel experiences of attractions and tourist destinations. They may also be required to direct tourists to shopping malls to persuade them to buy souvenirs, thereby supporting local businesses. Tour guides are the primary sales representatives for future tour products for travel firms (Lin et al., 2017). The enhancement of tour guides' professional competencies is therefore important as it could improve the quality of their services and job performance. As a result, it is a critical issue that continuously needs attention from travel organizations.

The concept of tour guides' professional competence is the key influencing element of service quality in this study. It can forecast how the professional competencies of tour guides would influence tourists' views of service quality. As depicted in Figure 1, professional competency includes various aspects such as skills and knowledge, attitude, time management, coordination skills, good behaviour, multilingualism and the ability to meet visitors' needs (Ferreira & Perks, 2020). These aspects can be called the guide's attributes. On the other hand, the nature of the tour also influences visitor satisfaction levels and overall experience. The following aspects are classified under the nature of the tour — ambience, the ability of the tour to be educational and informative, the need to be well-priced, conducted in smaller groups and safety at the destination. When a guide is competent (having positive attributes), it will lead to tourist satisfaction and positive referrals through word of mouth or reviews. The same applies to the nature of the tour — if it leads to learning, is safe, affordable, and conducted with manageable group sizes (preferably smaller), will result in satisfied visitors who are likely to recommend guided tours to other people.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted and continues to have long-lasting effects on the tourism sector globally (Bama et al., 2022). With the onset of the global pandemic, sudden and unexpected changes were bound to be experienced within the tourism sector (Mbatha et al., 2021; Nyawo, 2020). The same could be said of tour guides, given that they form an important segment of the tourism value chain (Do et al., 2022; Weiler & Black, 2015). Mbatha et al. (2021) further highlight that the eventual reopening of the tourism sector post-COVID-19 restrictions will not lead to the automatic recovery of the tour guides segment in the context of the segment's ability to generate willingness among a travel-shy population who will most likely place emphasis on safety. Consequently, the imposition and socio-economic stagnation experienced during this period would call for proactive measures and the revitalisation of resources to aid recovery and progress within the sector (Bama & Nyikana, 2021). Travel

restrictions and mobility control meant that tourist guides, who depend very much on the movement of people within geographic locations, were critically curtailed (Nyawo, 2020). Given that tour guides play an essential role in the tourism sector in ensuring knowledge improvement, the impact of the pandemic manifests in the extreme vulnerability of this segment and therefore there is a need for the reconsideration of personal safety as a critical element in the recovery of the tourism sector, specifically in relation to tour guides as integral stakeholders within this sector.

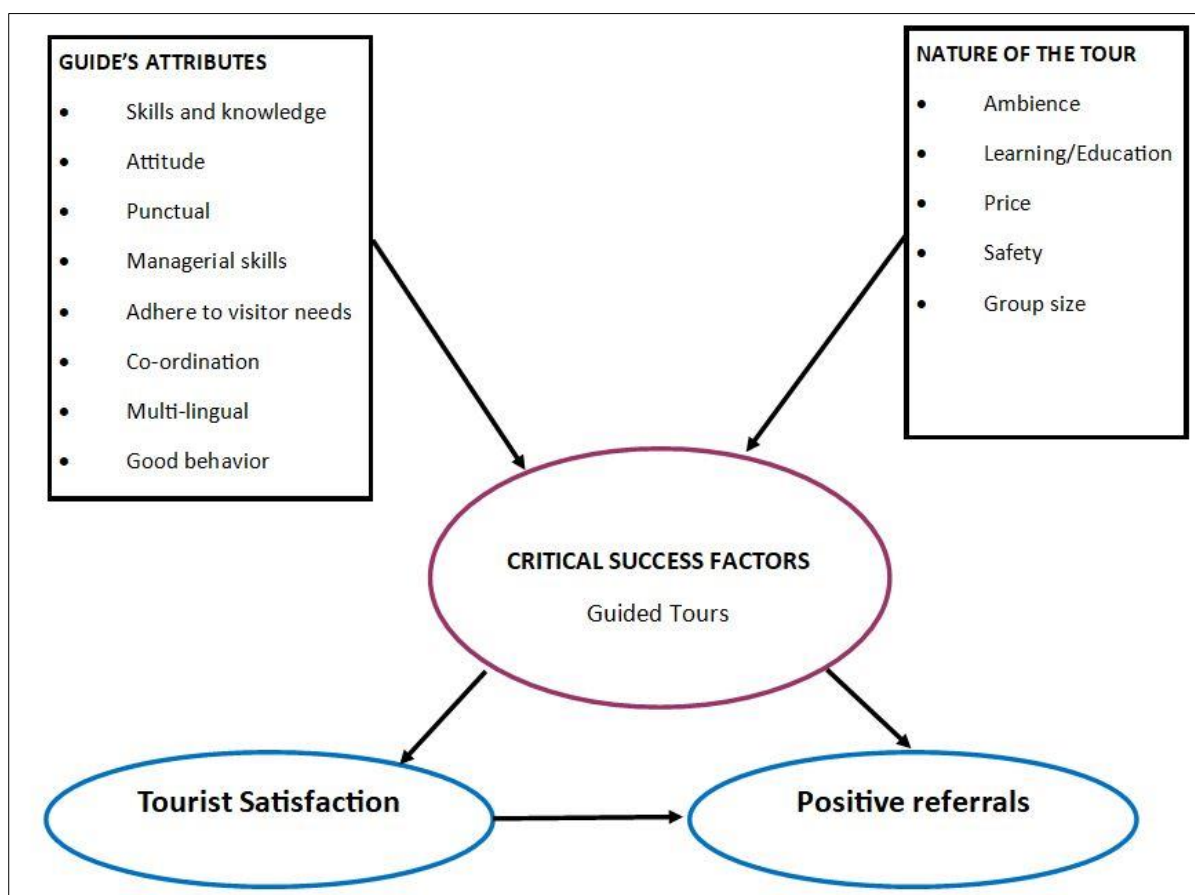


Figure 1. Conceptual framework - Critical success factors for a guided tour  
Source: Authors' construction based on literature

Extant literature confirms that successfully guided excursions and tours depend on the professional competencies of the individuals who lead and conduct these tours. Professional competencies include aspects such as the professional knowledge of the guides, skills and attitudes (Lin et al., 2017). From this, the researchers theorise that tourist guides who possess some competencies or professional attributes will enhance visitors' perceptions of service-guided tours, which in turn may influence their overall satisfaction and increase their propensity to give positive referrals. This study examines factors that are considered critical for the success of guided tours. The following section presents the methodology applied in data collection for the study and how the data were analysed.

### The research study

To determine the CSFs for a guided tour in the Western Cape Province of South Africa, a quantitative method was implemented, which is commonly used in tourism-related research as it provides the opportunity for triangulation of the collected data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Ezeuduji and Jager (2015) contend that quantified data are often required for tourism and hospitality research to reach a conclusion. The quantitative survey instrument used in this study was split into three parts and developed based on an extensive review of extant studies conducted on similar issues. The first part of the questionnaire comprised the participants' general profile with questions that intended to understand travel and its characteristics. In the second section of the survey instrument, a 5-point Likert scale was developed ranging from 'strongly disagree (1)' to 'strongly agree (5)', whereby the study participants (visitors on guided tours) were asked to rate given statements by highlighting their level of agreement with a list of predetermined factors considered important for guided tours. The last part of the questionnaire sought to gain background information about the participants and hence contained questions relating to their demographic profiles. These questions were considered relevant as they provided context for the collected data and assisted in a better understanding and analysis of the data with the use of correlations (Allen, 2017). Questionnaire variables originated from the reviewed literature. Literature on CSFs for various tourism elements from the supply and demand side led to the identification of the factors related to tour guiding (Crespi-Vallbona, 2021; Getz & Brown, 2006; Mohammad & Ammar, 2015; von der Weppen & Cochrane, 2012).

An empirical investigation was undertaken in several tourist hotspots throughout the Western Cape Province of South Africa. Tourists that embarked on guided tours were specifically chosen to participate in the study. The study data were gathered with the assistance of tour guides on guided tour excursions. The study's goal was initially explained, and approval was sought from the Cape Town Guiding Association (CTGA) and individual tour guides who conducted the trips. Appointments were made to meet with the tour guides to explain the research objective and to request that they distribute the questionnaires to the tourists during guided excursions. To access a large number of guided tours, tour guides were advised to focus on short excursions such as day trips. Given that the data were collected during the COVID-19 period (April 2021–October 2021), the researchers opted for online surveys rather than paper surveys. Once informed consent to participate had been obtained from the tourists on the guided excursions, they were given a link and requested to answer the questions with the tourist guide providing guidance when required. Furthermore, these tours happened predominantly during the allowable periods as stipulated in the risk-adjusted strategy provided by the South African government via the National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC) in which tourism activities were allowed during Levels 1 and 2.

In completing the study, the researchers adhered to all ethical considerations, starting by obtaining ethical clearance from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology's Faculty of Business and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (FBMSREC) with ethics certificate 2021\_FBMSREC\_004. In addition, consent was sought and received from each of the study participants. The questionnaire was designed so that the anonymity of participants was preserved, and they were not required to provide any identifying personal information.

IBM's Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed in analysing the 451 valid surveys that were gathered during the data collection process (IBM Corporation, 2021). The first stage of analysis used descriptive statistics to determine the frequencies of all the variables, followed by inferential statistical analysis (factor analysis) of selected variables to understand their associations and relationships.

## **Results and discussion**

In this section, the study findings are presented together with a discussion of the results. The section presents the profiles of the study participants followed by an analysis of the CSFs for a

guided tour. All the tourists who took part in the survey had previously engaged in guided tours and excursions.

### Profiles of the respondents

Results from the study revealed an almost equal distribution of males and females who participated in the study, with slightly more males (53.9%), than females (46.1%). The majority of the participants had completed a degree (68.0%), followed by those who had completed primary/secondary education (15.1%), while some reported that they held a postgraduate degree (12.6%). The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 76, with an average of 36.1 years. The study findings also showed that most of the tourists who participated were employed full-time, which suggests that they had the financial means to embark on guided tours. Table 1 presents the demographic profiles of the respondents showing their gender, age, employment status, income range, education level and marital status. The demographic variables were considered important in illustrating the socio-economic capacity of the participants to partake in guided tours.

Almost half of the participants (49.2%) on the guided tours were South Africans whilst 14.9% were from other African countries (Zimbabwe, 4.2%; the Democratic Republic of Congo, 2.7%; Nigeria, 2.2%; Namibia, 1.3%; Ethiopia, 0.9%; Kenya, Swaziland and Ghana, 0.7%). Some of South Africa's key tourist source markets were visible in the participants, such as Germany (6.7%), the United States of America (4.0%), France (3.3%), the United Kingdom and the Netherlands (3.1%). Participants from other countries were also noted, including Brazil (2.4%), Russia and Switzerland (1.3%), Portugal, Italy and Australia (0.7%), Pakistan, Belgium, Bulgaria and Sweden (0.4%).

Table 1. Descriptive results – participant’s demographic profiles (in%, n=451)

Variable	Category	%	Variable	Category	%
Gender	Male	53.9	Job-status	Full-time	56.3
	Female	46.1		Part-time	8.4
Marital status	Married	33.9		Self-employed	22.6
	Single	63.6		Retired	2.4
	In Relationship	1.1		Student	6.2
	Widowed	0.5		Unemployed	4.0
	Divorced	0.9	Education Level	Primary/Sec	15.1
Income (monthly)	None	1.6		Degree	68.0
	R1-R8000	6.4		PG Degree	12.6
	R8001- R10000	4.9		Diploma	3.1
	R10001-R20000	9.5	Certificate	1.1	
	R20 001-R30000	7.5	Age	<20 years	0.4
	R30001-R40000	8.6		21-30	25.3
	R40001-R50000	5.5		31-40	52.1
> R50001 (specify)	0.7	41-50		14.0	
Confidential	55.2	51-60		6.2	
NB: South African Currency is the ZAR / Rand denoted by (R)				61-70	1.8
			> 70 (specify)	0.2	

Source: Survey data

Table 2 summarises the characteristics of the tourists who participated in the research study. These characteristics include the following variables: main purpose of visiting the destination, duration of stay at the visited destination, travel classification, tour group composition, and accommodation types chosen by participants. Most of the participants were leisure travellers (60.8%), followed by the visiting friends and relatives (VFR) category (15.3%). This finding was to have been expected given that the data were collected in different periods during South

Africa’s COVID-19 adjusted alert levels when the promotion of domestic leisure travel was amplified (Sucheran, 2021). In terms of the travel group composition, families dominated (52.1%), followed by those who travelled as friends (30.8%), some travelling as business partners (8.0%), while others were travelling alone (8.4%). An overwhelming majority (84.7%) of the participants travelled in small groups of 2-10 people, and most of these individuals engaged in a cultural tour. More than half (51.0%) of the participants went on a cultural tour, while adventure and nature tour participants constituted 24.2% and 24.4% respectively.

In trying to understand traveller choices and attributes, and to ascertain the impact of guided tours at the visited destinations, participants were requested to indicate the types of accommodation as well as the duration of their stay at the destination (see Table 2). The study findings revealed Airbnb as the most sought-after accommodation type by the participants (25.3%), while those who used hotels constituted 21.3%. Guesthouse users amounted to 16.2%, with those utilising B&Bs making up 15.1% of the study participants. The other accommodation types used by the participants were lodges (5.8%), staying with friends and relatives (12%), on daily excursions and staying in their homes (3.8%) and 0.7% using backpackers’ accommodation. In terms of duration of stay at the visited destinations, almost equal ranges (1-3 days, 22.6%; 8-10 days, 20.4%; 11-14 days, 20.2%; 4-7 days, 19.3%) were noted.

Table 2. Descriptive results of participants' general profiles (in %, n=451)

Variable	Category	(%)	Variable	Category	(%)	
<i>Main purpose of visiting destination</i>	Business	9.8	<i>Size of travelling group</i>	Alone	7.3	
	Leisure	60.8		2-10	84.7	
	Recreation	8.4		11-30	5.5	
	VFR	15.3		31-50	1.8	
* Education	Health Reasons	0.7		51-100	0.7	
	Attend an Event	2.0	<i>Travel Classification</i>	Adventure	24.2	
	*Other	3.1		Nature	24.4	
<i>Travel Group composition</i>	N/A /Solo	8.4		Cultural	51.0	
	Business partners	8.0		*Other	0.4	
	* School	Friends	30.8	<i>Type of accommodation</i>	Hotel	21.3
Group	Family	52.1	Guesthouse		16.2	
	*Other	0.7	Backpackers (0.7%)		Airbnb	25.3
<i>Stay duration at destination</i>	1-3 days	22.6	*Friends & Rel. (12%)		B&B	15.1
	4 - 7 days	19.3	*Home (3.8%)		Lodge	5.8
	8 - 10 days	20.4			Other	16.4
	11 - 14 days	20.2				
*2 months - 3 years	15 - 30 days	8.6				
	>30 days (specify)	8.9				

Source: Survey data

Figure 2 illustrates the activities in which the visitors engaged besides the guided trip they were on. Multiple responses were permitted to allow the selection of all the possible responses. More than 400 participants (89.4%) indicated that 'eating-out' was one of the activities in which they partook. The Western Cape Province offers various eating out options catering to the tastes of different people from numerous restaurants (e.g., fine dining, street food markets, traditional meals, wineries). This was followed by those who engaged in 'cultural, historical & heritage' (85.6%). In this province, one finds several cultural centres and sites, museums, castles and protected areas which form part of the 'cultural, historical & heritage' component of tourist activities. A significant number of participants (376 - 83.4%) engaged in beach activities, followed by those who visited tourist attractions (81.8%), adventure (76.5%), shopping



(49.7%), nightlife (46.8%), wildlife (37.7%), entertainment (37.5%), business (14.9%), VFR (10.4%), trading (5.8%), visit to theme parks (4.2%) and sport (3.5%).

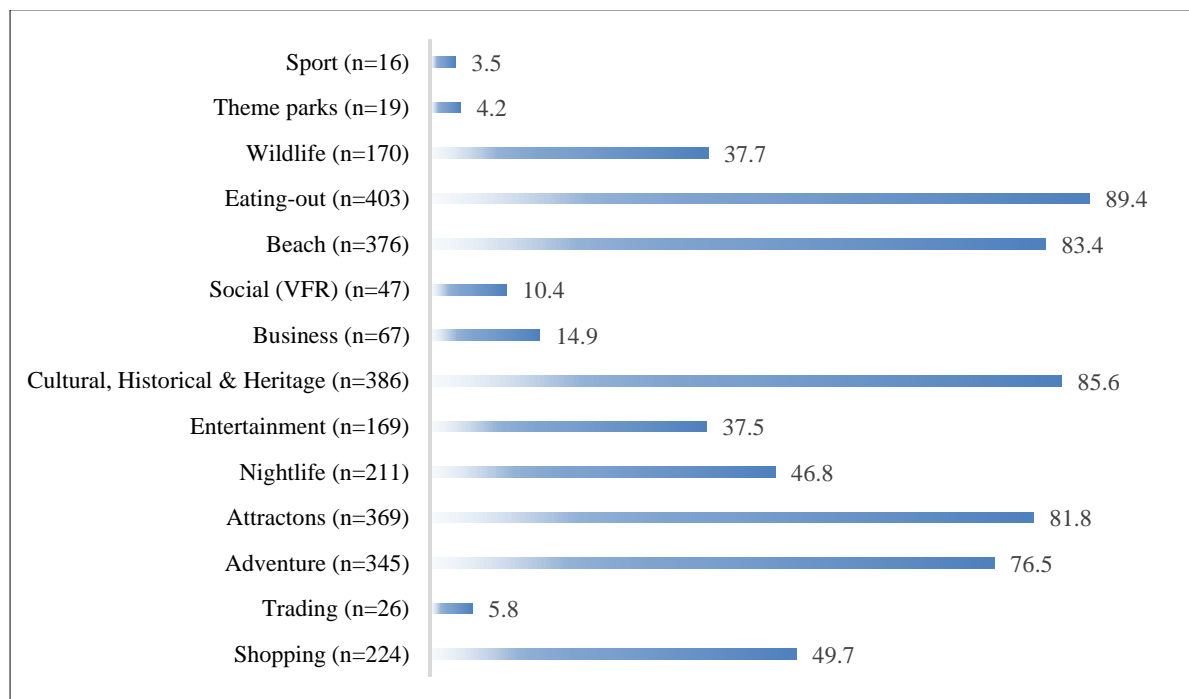


Figure 2. Activities the participants engaged in besides the guided trip/tour: Multiple response questions  
 Source: Survey data

In most cases, guided tours immerse people into the culture of the visited destinations and assist visitors to explore places with less worries (Crespi-Vallbona, 2021). The ability of these tours to satisfy visitors' expectations usually depends on several factors, which when available, would result in repeat visitation and positive referrals (Marais et al., 2017). The participants in the current study were requested to rate the value for money of the guided tour in which they participated, on a 5-point Likert scale from 'excellent' to 'not sure'. The results illustrated in Figure 3 show that the majority (59.9%) of participants rated the value for money tour as 'excellent' with 31.7% as 'good'. The mean for the score was 1.51 with standard deviation of 0.725, denoting that the participants were pleased with the tour since it offered value for their money.

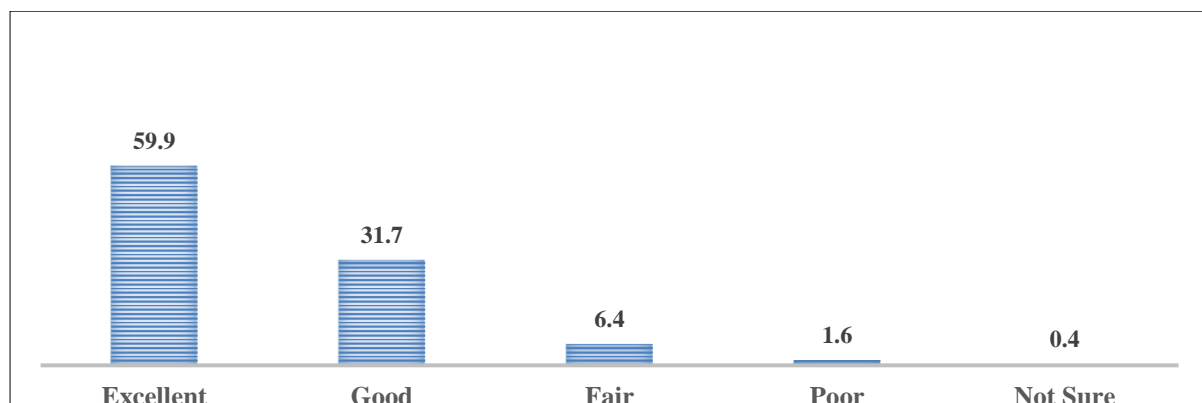


Figure 3: Rating for value for money for the guided tour (in%, n=451)  
 Source: Survey data

In trying to gauge whether the participants would recommend the tour to others, they were asked to indicate their propensity to give positive referrals for a guided tour. The study revealed that the participants found value in these kinds of tours, were satisfied, and hence were likely (45.5%) to give positive referrals, while 29.3% indicated that they were 'extremely likely' to give positive referrals (see Figure 4).

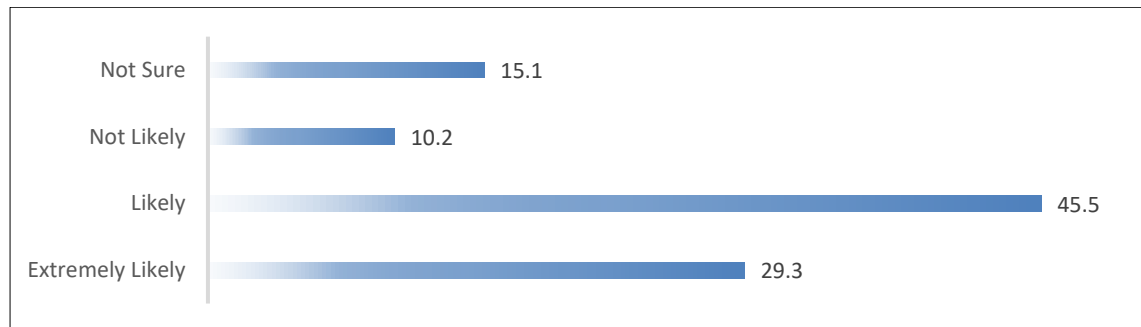


Figure 4: Likelihood of giving positive referrals for a guided tour (in %, n=451)  
Source: Survey data

From a cross-tabulation of selected variables, the study revealed that of the 29.3% who indicated that they were extremely likely to recommend guided tours or give positive referrals, most were male (17.70%) as opposed to 11.5% female. The gender split of participants who were likely to give positive referrals was very close, with 23.1% males and 22.4% females. An overwhelming majority (74.8%) of the study participants indicated their willingness to give positive referrals for guided tours, suggesting that these types of tours meet expectations and lead to visitor satisfaction. The results also demonstrate that the level of service provided by tour guides has a beneficial impact on visitor satisfaction which results in positive referrals and more visits (Moore et al., 2015). This finding shed light on practical implications for tour guides' competency development which is critical to improving tour guiding service quality and improving visitor satisfaction. In addition, the researchers tested for the likelihood of referrals in relation to educational levels. The study findings showed that those holding a qualification were more likely to give positive referrals (60.3%) compared to those who had a Matric certificate and primary/secondary education (39.7%).

### ***Critical success factors for a guided tour***

The extent of the agreement to specified CSFs was measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale, wherein the following response options and codes were provided: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree and SA = Strongly Agree. To facilitate better comprehension of the results in the explanations, the responses were merged; for example, 'SD' and 'D' were combined to provide a disagree result, but 'SA' and 'A' produced an agree result. Finally, the descriptions included three levels of agreement: agree, neutral, and disagree. The findings are discussed in relation to the demand and supply perspectives as reflected in Table 3.

Respondents were asked to indicate their opinion with regard to guided tours having to be informative. Almost all the participants (99.1%) generally agreed with a mean score of 4.93 highlighting nearly all the participants supporting the view that guided tours must be informative for them to remain successful (Crespi-Vallbona, 2021). The issue of safety remains critical in travel and tourism and is considered an important element which affects tourists' travel decision-making options (Radder & Wang, 2006). The study participants were overwhelmingly in agreement (97.5%) that safety is critical to the success of guided tours. This aligns with Seyitoğlu (2020b) who identified safety as one of the factors important in ensuring



a satisfactory tour experience at a tourism destination. The participants generally agreed that ambience is critical to the success of guided tours (91.6%). However, when the study participants were prompted to indicate their level of agreement with the statement that guided tours should be conducted in smaller groups, most disagreed (41.2%) compared to those who agreed (38.1%), with a mean score of 3.16. This seems to suggest that the size of the tour group does not significantly affect tourists' experiences.

The study also revealed general agreement with the statement that the personal experience of tourist guides adds value for money (mean 4.70). A large majority of the respondents (83.1%) agreed that tourist guides need to be able to conduct different types of tours (nature, adventure, cultural). Nearly all the respondents (98.2%) agreed to strongly agreed that tour guides must be punctual, while 95.4% agreed to strongly agreed that coordination is critical for guided tours. Similarly, 94.4% of the respondents agreed to strongly agreed that adhering to tourist needs is important in guided tours, with 86.4% agreeing to strongly agreeing that guided tours can be successful when offered at a reasonable price. Furthermore, 96.2% of the respondents agreed to strongly agreed that tour guide behaviour and skills are important for guided tours, while almost all the participants (97.6%) generally agreed that guided tours are a form of education. Lastly, 45.7% of the participants disagreed to strongly disagreed that tour guides should speak more than one language yet 39.9% saw the importance of speaking multiple languages while guiding tours.

Table 3. Level of agreement to CSFs for a guided tour (in %,  $n=451$ )

Statements	Level of agreement in %				
	D	N	A	Mean	Std.D
Guided tours must be informative	0.2	0.7	99.1	4.93	0.326
Safety is a crucial success factor for guided tours	0.4	2	97.5	4.41	0.568
Ambience is important for guided tours	1.3	7.1	91.6	4.30	0.679
Guided tours should be conducted in smaller groups	41.2	20.6	38.1	3.16	1.384
Personal experience of tour guides add value for money	3.3	3.1	93.5	4.70	0.734
Tour guides should be able to conduct different types of tours	5.1	11.8	83.1	4.49	0.955
Tour guides must be punctual	0.6	1.1	98.2	4.90	0.407
Coordination is important for guided tours	0.9	3.8	95.4	4.78	0.561
Tour guides should have managerial skills	1.6	10.6	87.8	4.57	0.778
Adhering to tourist needs is important	0.4	4.4	95.1	4.75	0.561
Guided tours should be offered at reasonable price	3.8	9.8	86.4	4.50	0.852
Tour guides should speak more than one language	45.7	14.4	39.9	3.01	1.603
Tour guide behaviour and skills are important for guided tours	0.9	2.9	96.2	4.83	0.513
Guided tours are a form of education	0.4	2	97.6	4.88	0.433

Note: "SD & D merged to form Disagree; N = Neutral; SA & A merged to form Agree; Std.D = Standard deviation"

Source: Survey data

The higher mean values (especially those above 4.3) showed a strong agreement with the statements while the lower mean values (below 3.2) denote strong disagreement. Some of the respondents were, however, undecided in their ratings of the CSFs, and thus assumed a neutral position.

### Results of the factor analysis

The 14 statements for the CSF for guided tours were subjected to Principal Components Analysis (PCA) using SPSS version 27. Before performing PCA, the researchers assessed the suitability of the data for factor analysis. The correlation matrix was inspected, and it revealed many coefficients of .3 and above. The Kaizer-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was .803, exceeding the recommended value of .6 (Kaizer, 1974). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity showed statistical significance ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) supporting the factor analysis test (Pallant, 2013). Specifically, the Bartlett's test achieved statistical significance at  $p = .000$  ( $\chi^2(91) = 1106.322$ ) supporting factorability. The outputs from the factor analysis showed those items referred to as 'common



factors’ which were assumed to account for most of the variance in the observed variables. The factors were rotated and interpreted using the Varimax rotation method to determine the items that make them ‘common.’ Only the factors with eigenvalues >1 were used, and these comprised factors that appeared above elbow or break of the scree plot.

The study measures emerged as a three-factor solution (see Table 4) and the resultant factors were named and discussed in relation to the relevant literature. The three factors accounted for 46% of the total variance. One of the three identified factors, Factor 1, had a relatively high reliability coefficient of .72 which is acceptable and considered good (Cho, 2016; Hoekstra et al., 2019; Taber, 2018). When Factor 2 was subjected to reliability testing, the results showed a low Cronbach Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) value .58 which Taber (2018) considered as ‘satisfactory’ since it falls within the range 0.58–0.97. Although a low reliability score of .47 was noticed on Factor 3, it was still considered ‘acceptable’ as it is within the range 0.45–0.98 (Cho, 2016; Cho & Kim, 2015; Taber, 2018).

Table 4. Critical success factors (CSF) for guided tours in the Western Cape Province

	FL	M	RC	MIC	Std.D
<b>Factor 1: Requirements for better guided tours</b>		4.85	.72	0.51	0.467
Guided tours must be informative	.752				
Guided tours are a form of education	.703				
Tour guides must be punctual	.684				
Coordination is important for guided tours	.623				
Tour guide behaviour and skills are important for guided tours	.543				
Adhering to tourist needs are important	.519				
<b>Factor 2: Expectations for guided tours</b>		3.72	.58	0.39	1.059
Guided tours should be conducted in small group size of up to 10 participants	.751				
Tour guides should speak more than one language	.741				
Safety is a crucial success factor for guided tours	.690				
Ambience is important for guided tours	.496				
<b>Factor 3: Conditions for improved guided tours</b>		4.56	.47	0.25	0.830
Tour guides should be able to conduct different types of guided tours	.651				
Guided tours should be offered at reasonable price	.625				
Tour guides should have managerial skills	.604				
Personal experiences of tour guides add value for money	.425				
<b>Total Variance</b>	<b>46%</b>				

Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation Method, Factor Loading (FL); Mean (M); Reliability Coefficient (RC); Mean Inter-item Correlation (MIC); Standard Deviation (Std.D)

Source: Survey data

Factor scores were calculated as means of all the items that contributed to a specific factor to enable interpretation of the original 5-point scale measurement. As shown in Table 4, three factors were identified: requirements for better-guided tours; the expectation for guided tours; and conditions for improved guided tours.

### ***Requirements for better-guided tours***

Factor 1 was described and labelled as requirements for better or improved guided tour experiences and received the highest mean value of 4.85 with an MIC value of 0.51 and standard deviation of 0.467. This factor was considered the most important CSF for guided tours in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. When tourists visit destinations, their experience at the visited location is critical as it could influence future choices and decisions (Hasan et al., 2022). Several elements were considered critical, especially in the quest for improved guided tours. As shown, this includes ensuring that ‘guided tours are informative,’ and enabling the users of such tours to benefit from the ‘educational’ role they play. In addition, the individuals conducting these tours (guides) need to respect time and be ‘punctual’ to prevent ruining visitors’ experience. Tour guide behaviour and skills are important for guided

tours and were also identified as important in better or successful guided tours as revealed in the current study. Finally, ‘adhering to tourist needs’ is invaluable in enhancing the tourist experience, especially in guided tours, as supported by Hwang and Lee’s (2019) study.

### ***Expectations for guided tours***

Factor 2, labelled expectations for guided tours, received the lowest mean value of 3.72 with a MIC score of 0.39 and a standard deviation of 1.059. Among the various aspects of guided tour expectations, the participants highlighted the importance of small groups, indicating that ‘guided tours should be conducted in small groups of up to 10 participants (FL=0.751), the most important element in this group. This was followed by an aspect of multilingualism, ‘tour guides should speak more than one language’ (FL=0.741). Safety was also indicated as critical in guided tours, ‘safety is a crucial success factor for guided tours’ (FL=0.604). The fourth element in this category describes ‘ambience’ as a CSF for guided tours with a factor loading of 0.496. These findings concur with the findings of several studies which revealed that safety, an element of ‘expectation for guided tours’ is key to the success of tours of any category (Mackenzie & Raymond, 2020; Weiler & Black, 2015).

### ***Conditions for improved guided tours***

Factor 3, the aspect relating to the conditions for better or improved guided tours, was considered an important CSF (mean value 4.56) for guided tours in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. The MIC was 0.25, with a standard deviation of 0.830. The ability to ‘conduct different types of guided tours’ had a higher loading at 0.651, followed by the ‘price’ which was seen as important in guided tours, and in this regard, the study participants highlighted that ‘guided tours should be offered at reasonable price’ (FL=0.625). In addition, the participants indicated that ‘tour guides should have managerial skills’ (FL=0.604) whereas the ‘personal experience of guides’ was noted as critical and important, especially in adding value for money (FL=0.425), all of which contribute to the success of guided tours.

## **Discussion**

Based on the findings of the current study, the research implications are highlighted. Firstly, the study results identified three CSFs for guided tours conducted in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. These three factors are requirements for better-guided tours, expectations for guided tours and conditions for improved guided tours. It is apparent from the study that guided tours need to be ‘informative’ and perform the information portal role by acting as a ‘form of education.’ When people travel, the quality of their experience can be enhanced when they ‘understand what they are experiencing’ (Saayman, 2013). Tourist guides thus play a critical role in helping visitors to understand the attractions and visited destinations, and this is achieved through their interpretation of destinations and all their elements. Therefore, this interpretation should be made in languages that visitors can understand, thus the need for ‘multilingual’ guides, which was indicated in this study as critical for the success of guided tours. The personal qualities or characteristics that make a good tourist guide were highlighted, and this included punctuality, skills such as managerial, flexibility to manage different tours, good behaviour, and multilingualism. In addition, factors linked to the type and conditions in which tours are delivered were emphasised as important for guided tours. These factors include ambience, affordability (price), value for money, safety, and group size. It is therefore important for tourism operators and suppliers to understand these factors so that energy can be directed towards ensuring that visitors’ experiences are enhanced, which would encourage repeat visits and positive recommendations. As indicated earlier, the majority of visitors

(74.8%) in the current study were ‘more likely’ to ‘extremely likely’ to recommend guided tours for their interpretative role of destinations.

### Conclusions and implications

The study's findings are beneficial to tourism destination planners because they may assist them in addressing concerns about service quality and assuring tourist satisfaction. In addition, tourist guides would become aware of the areas that require improvement in their roles. Ultimately, this could lead to tour guides investing in skills development and knowledge expansion to conduct tours that satisfy visitors. The ultimate result of visitor satisfaction is loyalty, which is seen when there is visitor retention, positive referrals, and an influx of visitors to the destination (Ramukumba, 2018), who could opt for guided excursions on their holiday. The study further contributes to serving as a guide for further studies that may seek to investigate how guided tours in other provinces of South Africa should be conducted and ultimately improved. Furthermore, the study could provide a basis for tour guides within the Western Cape Province and South Africa more broadly to undertake more successful guided tours by understanding the CSFs required. In addition, being a less-explored research area, the findings could steer scholarly discussions and enhance existing literature around CSFs specifically and tour guiding in general, while serving as a basis for future research enquiries globally. Given the dearth of literature in the South African context around the area of tourist guiding, this study makes a modest contribution to the advancement of theory in this area. Policymakers could also benefit from the outcomes of the study to re-energise the tourist guiding sector within the broader tourism industry.

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