



Research Article

**THE EFFECT OF GUIDING STYLES ON MEMORABLE TOURISM EXPERIENCES,  
SATISFACTION AND INTENTION TO RECOMMEND**

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**Abstract**

Tour guides are of pivotal importance within tourism sector, serving as essential intermediaries between tourists and the destination. The study aims to investigate the relationships between guiding styles, memorable tourism experiences, satisfaction, and intention to recommend. Despite the significance of the guiding styles of tour guides in shaping the tourist experience, there is a paucity of research in this area. The study's methodology entailed the administration of questionnaires to a sample of domestic tourists over the age of 18 who had participated in guided tours between January and September 2024. A total of 401 questionnaires were deemed usable following a thorough data collection process that incorporated both face-to-face and online methodologies. The statistical package program was utilized to examine the available data, and regression analyses were implemented to ascertain the relationships between the variables. The results indicated that guiding styles have positive effects on memorable tourism experiences, satisfaction, and intention to recommend. On the other hand, memorable tourism experiences positively affect both tourist satisfaction and intention to recommend. Theoretical and managerial implications are provided.

**Keywords:** Guiding Styles; Tourist Satisfaction; Memorable Tourism Experience; Intention to Recommend

**Introduction**

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO); while the number of people participating in tourism in 1950 was 25 million, this figure reached 1.5 billion people in 2019. In addition, this figure is expected to increase to 1.8 billion people in 2030 (UNWTO, 2024). The tourism sector is in a state of constant growth and development, in accordance with changing consumer behavior. Tourist destinations must provide quality services and constantly renew themselves to gain a competitive advantage (Çetinkaya and Öter, 2016). Tourist guided package tours have grown in popularity and are a significant part of the travel industry (Bowie and Chang 2005). It is assumed that tour guides, who are destinations' primary representatives, play an instrumental role in the creation of memorable tourism experiences (MTE), tourist satisfaction (SAT) and the intention to recommend (ITR). A tour guide is a person who accompanies tourists in their preferred language and provides information about the natural and cultural heritage of a specific region. They are typically recognized and authorized by the relevant authority (World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations, 2023) By promoting responsible tourist behavior and compliance with site restrictions, guides help reduce the negative effects of tourism (Khater, Muhammad Zeki Mahmood Al-Leheabi and Faik, 2024). A tour guide can elevate a tourist's journey into an experience through their guiding skills, making it more than just a tour (Ap and Wong, 2001, p.551). Guides turn visits into meaningful educational experiences by improving visitors' comprehension and appreciation of cultural heritage through narrative, interpretation, and interactive activities (Khater, Ibrahim, Al-Salim and Faik, 2025). Tour guides can perform more than one role during guidance services (Çapar et al., 2020). Tour guides develop various guiding styles (GS) with these roles (Tsaour and Teng, 2017). Cohen (1985) divides the roles of tour guides into four categories: instrumental, social,

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interactional and communicative. Four guiding roles come to the fore in the studies focusing on the tour guiding roles, namely; resource management, leadership, cultural mediation and interpreter (Köroğlu, 2014).

Tourists have a variety of experiences during their travels (Keskin et al., 2020). Subsequent to these experiences, tourists report positive sentiments and emotions, which create a MTE (Lee et al., 2014). A positive tourism experience at a chosen destination may prompt tourists to seek out similar experiences in the future or to suggest the experience to others (Çavuşoğlu et al., 2022). The concept of customer satisfaction refers to the fulfillment of consumer expectations regarding the quality of a product or service as a consequence of the purchase and utilization of that product or service (Guido, 2015; Kantaroğlu, 2018). Despite the challenges associated with customer satisfaction in service sector, businesses across the spectrum endeavor to meet the needs and expectations of their respective customer bases (Kılıçlar and Çevrimkaya, 2019). Gave and Goldman (1991) emphasized that the satisfaction of visitors and the overall success of a guided tour rely on the performance of tour guides. Tsaur and Teng (2017) asserted that guiding style of the tour guide exert a decisive influence on the tour experience of the tourist. The guiding style of tour guides in guided tours is closely related to MTE, SAT, and ITR. To the best of authors' knowledge there is no study focusing on the relationships between these four variables. Thus, this research aims to fill this research gap.

### **Literature and Research Hypotheses**

Tourist guiding, which is grounded in mythology, allegorical literature, history, and geographical exploration (Cohen, 1985), is now recognized as a profession in many countries (Cohen, 2002). In the literature, guides are also referred to as tour leaders (Wong and Lee, 2012; Wong and Wang, 2009; Tsaur and Teng, 2017). A tour guide is defined as “a person who provides guidance to visitors in a language of their choice, interpreting the region's natural and cultural heritage, and possessing qualifications recognized or endorsed by relevant institutions” (WFTGA, 2023).

Cohen (1985) emphasizes the concepts of pathfinder and mentor in the context of the tour guide. According to Cohen et al. (2002, p.920) a tour guide serves a multifaceted role that extends beyond the conventional responsibilities of a guide. In addition to educating tourists and providing spiritual guidance, a tour guide also assigns meaning to the objects encountered by tourists, thereby assuming responsibilities that extend beyond the traditional scope of a guide. Tourist guiding is acknowledged as a challenging profession. It has been noted that tour guides exert significant emotional labor while performing their duties (Güzel et al., 2013). Due to their responsibility to ensure participants have an enjoyable experience and to address any issues or complaints they encounter, this profession is characterized by high emotional demands (Wong and Wang, 2009).

Tour guides assume various roles while fulfilling their duties. According to Cohen (1985), the roles of tour guides can be categorized into four types: instrumental, social, interactional, and communicative. The instrumental role involves the guide leading the group, providing direction, facilitating access to sites included in the tour program, and ensuring the group's safety and comfort. The social role pertains to maintaining group cohesion and morale. The interactional role functions as a mediator between local communities, tourism enterprises, and tourists. The communicative role involves selecting sites to visit and presenting accurate information through personal interpretation. Studies in the literature on the roles assumed by guides have predominantly highlighted resource management, leadership, cultural mediation, and interpretive roles (Köroğlu, 2014).

Guides develop various guiding styles through these roles. Guiding style is defined as a consistent approach or pattern exhibited by a tour guide while performing their duties, based on the roles they assume (Tsaur and Teng, 2017). In her study, Lopez (1980) examined the leadership styles of guides across two dimensions: democratic and authoritarian leadership. Tsaur and Teng (2017) developed a scale that identifies twelve guiding styles: attentive, prepared, humorous, understanding, customer-oriented, cultural ambassador, articulate, meticulous, quick-witted, responsible, thoughtful, and customer-focused. Örnek and Avcı (2019) applied the same scale to guides in Turkey, identifying four guiding styles: customer-oriented, responsible, communicatively skilled, and detail-oriented. Çapar et al. (2020) conducted a similar study on tourists participating in dynamic guided tours in Mersin and identified six guiding styles: caregiver, social, crisis management, instrumental, communication-focused, and interaction-focused. Wong and Lee (2012) exposed three aspects of leading styles in their in-depth interviews: task-oriented, customer-oriented, and group climate control-focused. Another area of inquiry regarding the diverse styles of guides is conflict management. In their study, Caber et al. (2019) categorized guides based on dominant styles of conflict management into three types: typical mediators, young rule-setters, and tolerant experts.

Tourist experience has been salient in tourism research since the 1960s (Uriely, 2005). An important motivation for tourists is to have different experiences (Quan and Wang, 2005). In Larsen's (2007) definition, the tourist experience is an activity that leaves a lasting impression, one that can be retained in long-term memory. This definition emphasized the importance of memorability in tourism experience research. Kim et al. (2012) revealed seven dimensions of MTE: hedonism, novelty, local culture, knowledge, meaningfulness, involvement and refreshment. Investigating the structure of MTE is still a popular area of research (Hosany et al., 2022; Hosseini et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2024). MTE has been an important concept not only for academics but also for tourism business managers. Managers should focus on providing tourists with MTE as it increases revenue and positive behavioral intentions (Kim, 2010). Destinations aim to enhance competitive advantage by offering MTEs that would lead to positive tourist behavior like revisiting and ITR (Baby et al., 2023). Tour guides' contribution in creating MTE remains under-researched area. However, it is evident that the role of guides in ensuring that tourists have MTE is important (Mathisen, 2012; Koç, 2022). As postulated by Mathisen (2012) the varying perspectives held by tour guides regarding their roles are significant in determining how to co-create experiences. Koroğlu (2014) asserts that a tour guide's performance has the potential to create a memorable experience and positive behavioral intention. Zatori et al. (2018) posited that tour guides play a pivotal role in shaping the tourist experience. Therefore, it can be hypothesized:

H1: Guiding styles positively affect memorable tourism experiences.

SAT and the ITR are crucial concepts in tourism studies, closely linked to the overall quality of travel experience and the potential for positive word-of-mouth (WOM) promotion. Tourists' overall assessment of the quality of the destination is reflected in their level of satisfaction. If visitors are happy with their experience, they have a tendency to suggest it and share its attractions (Chen and Tsai, 2007; Lee et al., 2014). The more impressed tourists are with the destination, the greater their satisfaction level. Tour guides, in tourists' eyes, are frontline professionals whose role is to represent the destinations (Pereira, 2015) thus they play a pivotal role in the success of tourism destinations (Zhang and Chow, 2004). Tour guides, through their expertise and effective communication skills, are well placed to enrich tourists' experience and understanding of a destination, including its natural and cultural aspects (Ap and Wong, 2001). Their positive and significant impact on satisfaction has attracted considerable attention in the tourism literature (Chang, 2014). It has been reported (Çetinkaya and Öter, 2016) that tour guide performance and satisfaction are positively related. According to Alzghoul et al. (2024) the quality of the tour guide's performance emerged as a pivotal factor in shaping tourists' overall experience and satisfaction levels. Alazaizeh et al. (2019) asserts that performance of tour guides plays a crucial role in influencing the link between satisfaction and behavioral intention. Heung's (2008) study found that the professional attitude and abilities of the tour leader have a positive impact on tourists' word-of-mouth publicity. Chan, Hsu and Baum (2015) also reported that the impact of tour guiding services on satisfaction with tour services is the most significant. The results of the study also suggest that behavioral intentions are determined by the quality of the tour guide service and the satisfaction of the tourists. A study by Huang et al. (2015) found that behavioral intention is positively impacted by tour guide performance. Similarly, Syakier and Hanfiah (2022) assert that there is a significant relationship between the tour guides and satisfaction of tourists. This satisfaction has been shown to positively influence their behavioral intentions, which in turn affect their revisit intentions and reputation. Based on these studies, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2: Guiding styles positively affect tourist satisfaction.

H3: Guiding styles positively affect intention to recommend.

It is imperative to recognize that tourists seek out memorable and distinctive experiences when traveling to remarkable places (Lee, 2015). Furthermore, it is essential for tourism sites to provide memorable experiences in order to obtain a competitive edge in the free market (Buhalis, 2015). Torabi et al. (2022) reported that tourists' memorable experiences have a substantial impact on their satisfaction levels. Chen, Cheng and Kim (2020) found that the creation of MTEs has the potential to elicit positive emotional reactions in tourists, such as a sense of enjoyment, which can subsequently influence their behavioral intentions. Thus, following hypotheses are proposed:

H4: Memorable tourism experiences positively affect tourist satisfaction.

H5: Memorable tourism experiences positively affect intention to recommend.

Intention to recommend is when travelers act as promoters by encouraging others to visit the tourist spot, serving as advertising agents (Chen and Chen, 2010). If tourists are highly satisfied, they are also highly likely

to recommend to others. Previous studies show that SAT affects the ITR (Williams, and Soutar, 2009; Altunel and Erkut, 2015; Sohn, Lee and Yoon, 2016). Therefore, it can be hypothesized:

H6: Tourist satisfaction positively affects intention to recommend.

## Methodology

This study aims to examine the relationships between GS, MTE, ITR and SAT. A quantitative approach was used to reveal these relationships. The study population comprises domestic tourists who have participated in guided tours. Convenience sampling was preferred for this research. According to convenience sampling, data are gathered from individuals who are readily accessible and willing to participate in the research (Erkuş, 2011, p. 145). A lack of clarity and reliability exists regarding the number of domestic tourists participating in guided tours in Turkey. Assuming a population ranging from 1 to 100 million, Yazıcıoğlu and Erdoğan (2004) established a sample size of 384, while Büyüköztürk (2010) stipulated 386, taking into account a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level. In this direction, a total of 401 usable data were obtained and these data were included in the sample group. The data were collected in January and September 2024 via face-to-face or online interviews with individuals aged 18 and over who previously attended guided tours and were accessible through the convenience sampling method. *The ethics committee permission required for this study was granted by Mardin Artuklu University with session no:6, decision no:9 dated 10.01.2024,*

A questionnaire was employed to collect data for this study. The questionnaire comprises 5 sections: demographic questions, guiding styles scale, satisfaction scale, MTE scale and ITR scale. The GS scale was borrowed from Çapar et al. (2020) who adapted Tsaur and Teng's (2017) GS scale into Turkish. The MTE scale borrowed from Kim (2018), consists of 5 items. The SAT scale consists of 3 statements (Nguyen, 2015) and 3 items were used to measure ITR (Japutra et al., 2021). The statements in the scale were measured with Likert-type response options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

A total of 401 questionnaires were collected for the research. The questionnaires were transferred to the SPSS software. Missing value analysis was carried out and the highest missing data rate was found to be 1.5%. Series averages were assigned to the missing data. Following this, the normal distributions of the scales were checked. This was done by using skewness and kurtosis values to assess the normality of the distributions. The skewness value between -2 and +2 indicates that the data exhibits a normal distribution (George and Mallery, 2010). The skewness values of the statements employed in the present study exhibit a range of -2,02 to -0,21 and the kurtosis values -1,24 to 4,74. Based on these observations, it can be posited that the data displays a normal distribution. Reliability analysis yielded Cronbach Alpha values ranging between 0,885-0,978 indicating that the scales are highly reliable.

## Results

The majority of the participants were women (62.8%) and slightly over half of the respondents (50.63%) were married. A review of the age distribution of the participants reveals that over half of them are 34 years of age or below. Additionally, nearly half of the participants have prior experience in guided tours. Among respondents, almost half of the participants (44.22%) attended the tour with friends while one-third (35.68%) traveled with their family members. An examination of the educational background of the participants reveals that 60.49% have obtained at least a bachelor's degree (Table 1).

**Table 1. Sociodemographic Characteristics of The Respondents**

Sociodemographic		Number	%
Gender (n=401)	Male	149	37.20
	Female	252	62.80
Marital Status (n=395)	Married	200	50.63
	Single	195	49.37
Age (n=400)	<25	59	14.75
	25-34	163	40.75
	35-44	85	21.25
	45-54	47	11.75
	55-64	26	6.50
	>64	20	5.00
Number of Previous Tours (n=397)	1-2	176	44.33
	3-4	103	25.94
	5-6	51	12.85
	7 and above	67	16.88

<b>Accompany (n=398)</b>	Alone	55	13.82
	Family	142	35.68
	Friends	176	44.22
	Other	25	6.28
<b>Tour Duration (n=400)</b>	1-2 days	174	43.50
	3-4 days	133	33.25
	5-6 days	55	13.75
	7 days and over	38	9.50
<b>Education (n=395)</b>	Primary School	4	1.01
	Middle School	7	1.77
	High School	65	16.46
	Associate degree	84	21.27
	Undergraduate	174	44.05
	Master's degree/PhD	61	15.44

According to Table 2, the results of the first regression analysis revealed a strong correlation ( $r=0.718$ ) between GS and MTE. The model is statistically significant ( $p<0.001$ ). The GS account for 51.5% of the variance in the MTE. This result indicates that GS has a considerable positive influence on the formation of a MTE. In this instance, the first hypothesis H1 is accepted. A highly significant relationship ( $r=0.847$ ) was found between GS and SAT. The results demonstrate that GS account for 71.7% of SAT ( $p<0.001$ ). The third model revealed a positive relationship between GS and ITR. GS explain 61.9% of SAT. In this case, H2 and H3 are supported.

**Table 2. Regression Analysis**

	$\beta$	Stand. Beta	Model F	$R^2$	p	D-W
GS→MTE	0.685	0.718	423.988	0.515	*	1.887
GS→SAT	0.929	0.847	1013.137	0.717	*	1.812
GS→ITR	0.834	0.786	647.019	0.619	*	1.733
MTE→SAT	0.826	0.718	425.499	0.516	*	1.699
MTE→ITR	0.826	0.713	492.175	0.552	*	1.909
SAT→ITR	0.837	0.866	1195.003	0.75	*	1.961

Regression analysis revealed a high level of positive relationships. According to results, the variable of MTE can be seen to account for 51.6% of SAT and 55.2% of ITR. Thus, H4 and H5 are supported. The last model examined the relationship between SAT and ITR. The results demonstrated a strong and positive relationship between SAT and ITR, with SAT explaining 75% of the ITR. A one unit increase in SAT was found to lead to a 0.837 unit increase in the ITR. Thus, H6 was supported.

## Conclusions and Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the relationships between guiding styles, memorable tourism experience, satisfaction, and intention to recommend. In order to achieve this goal, this study used a quantitative approach by collecting data from tourists who participated in guided tours. Guides, as representatives of the destination, are instrumental in fostering deep connections with tourists and enhancing their overall experience. When tourists have memorable experiences they have a tendency to feel satisfied and recommend to others (Kim, 2018). This reinforces the significance of guide performance as a strategic asset for tourism businesses and destinations aiming to build long-term loyalty and positive reputation.

The present study seeks to address the shortcomings of existing research in this area by demonstrating the direct connection among GS, MTE, SAT, and ITR. The findings revealed positive relationships between the constructs. As hypothesized, guiding styles positively affect MTE (H1). This result is in line with previous studies (Kim, 2010; Mathisen, 2012; Koroğlu, 2014; Zatori, 2018) which emphasize that guiding styles have positive affect on memorable tourism experiences. Guides are also important actors in creating satisfaction (Huang et al., 2010). Research conducted by Tsai et al. (2016) shows that the capabilities of the tour guide are essential for achieving satisfaction. The findings also showed that guiding styles positively affect SAT (H2). These findings are consistent with findings reported by previous studies (Alazaizeh et al., 2019; Çetinkaya and Öter, 2016; Heung 2008). Çapar et al. (2020) found that GS influences WOM. Chan et al. (2015) asserted that the performance of tour guides significantly influences behavioral intentions. Similarly, Huang et al. (2015)

reported that the performance of the tour guides has a positive effect on behavioral intention. Consequently, the hypothesis, which posits that GS positively affects ITR (H3), yields parallel results to those observed in the aforementioned studies.

The hypotheses which posit that MET positively affect SAT (H4) and ITR (H5), are also consistent with extant literature. Tourists who have MTE, would be satisfied with the trip (Sharma and Nayak, 2019; Torabi et al., 2022; Zhong et al., 2017;) and would recommend the tour to others (Altürk, 2022; Chen et al., 2020; Altürk, 2022; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Sharma and Nayak, 2019). The present study lends support to the hypothesis that SAT positively affect ITR (H6). This finding is consistent with the conclusions of earlier research. As posited by Williams and Soutar (2009), satisfaction exerts an influence on intention. A study conducted in the context of local festivals revealed a significant and positive relationship between overall satisfaction and behavioral intentions among visitors (Sohn et al., 2016). Similarly, Altunel and Erkut's (2015) study demonstrated that satisfaction exerts a positive effect on recommendation. This indicates that highly satisfied tourists are more likely to recommend the destination to others.

In terms of theoretical contributions, this study provides evidence that guiding styles have a significant impact on memorable tourism experiences. The study posits that tour guides play a critical role in shaping tourists' perceptions and memories, which are crucial components of tourism experience. Another important theoretical contribution of this study is that it provides evidence that memorable tourism experience is a key variable in creating satisfaction and intention to recommend. As indicated by the findings of this study, it is imperative to implement systematic training and development programs for guides with the objective of refining their techniques. This approach is deemed crucial for the enhancement of visitor satisfaction, a pivotal factor in ensuring the competitiveness of given destination. The findings of the study demonstrated that the efforts of tour guides can have a significant effect on the promotion of a particular destination. This comprehensive study presents a novel, multifaceted theoretical framework that elucidates the nexus among guiding styles, memorable tourism experiences, tourist satisfaction and intention to recommend. The holistic approach adopted in this study addresses a significant gap in existing literature by offering a systematic understanding of how diverse guiding styles can influence tourists' experiences, satisfaction and intention to recommend.

From a practical perspective, these results carry multiple implications for the tourism sector. Destination managers and tour operators should acknowledge the importance of investing in the professional growth of their guides, especially in interpersonal communication, emotional intelligence, and cultural knowledge. This will not only elevate the overall standard of the guided experience but also boost satisfaction and cultivate a deeper emotional bond between tourists and the destinations. Customizing guide training to address various tourist needs, likes, and guiding styles will contribute to crafting more individualized, captivating experiences that make a memorable impact.

This research supports tour guides' importance in crafting significant tourism experiences. Their guiding styles directly affect not only tourists' satisfaction but also their intention to recommend the destination to others. Therefore, investing in training for guides, improving guiding methods, and ensuring that guides understand their role in co-creating memorable experiences will be essential for the long-term success and sustainability of tourism destinations. By focusing on improving the tourist experience at the guiding level, tourism companies can foster loyal visitors who are more inclined to advocate for the destination, thereby aiding in the sustained growth and competitiveness of the tourism industry. In the context of intensifying competition in the tourism industry, destination management organizations (DMOs) must prioritize the enhancement of tour guide quality to foster increased visitor retention.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

This study has several limitations. Firstly, the data was collected through a survey; in future studies, the use of the interview method, a qualitative research method, will facilitate a more profound understanding of the subject. Second, this study examined the effects of guidance styles on memorable tourism experiences, satisfaction, and intention to recommend. Future research could address variables such as revisit intention, destination image, and tourist loyalty. The present study was conducted exclusively on domestic tourists. Further research with foreign tourists is necessary to ascertain the differences between these two groups. The findings indicate that future research might delve deeper into the subtle ways different guiding styles affect various tourist types like solo adventurers compared to family units or particular cultural contexts. This might offer a deeper understanding of how guides can modify their approaches to enhance satisfaction among various demographic groups. Furthermore, investigating the psychological processes involved in creating memorable

tourism experiences and how they influence tourists' behavioral intentions would provide a deeper insight into the factors that encourage repeat visits and support for destinations.

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