

## Examining Interrelationships among Tourists Guides' Professional Competencies, Service Quality, Satisfaction, Loyalty, Destination Image and Tourism Sustainable Development

Tamer Hamdy Ayad \*

Department of Management, School of Business, King Faisal University, 380 Al-Ahsaa,  
Saudi Arabia. Email: [tayad@kfu.edu.sa](mailto:tayad@kfu.edu.sa)- ORCID ID: [0000-0003-0737-4569](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0737-4569)

Tourism Studies Department, Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Suez Canal University, 41522  
Ismailia, Egypt.

Noha Mohamed Hafez, Sherin Mohamed Hafez

Tourism Guidance Department, Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Suez Canal University,  
41522 Ismailia, Egypt.

### Abstract

The tourism industry serves as a fundamental pillar within economies worldwide. In the face of escalating competitiveness, fostering sustainable tourism development emerges as a crucial strategy. Consequently, this study endeavours to scrutinize the intricate connections among tourist satisfaction, service quality, professional competencies, tourist loyalty, destination image, and the promotion of sustainable tourism. A sample of 624 tourists was selected through simple random sampling, yielding a commendable response rate of 98.3%. Employing Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM V.4), the study explores the relationships between the variables and tests the formulated research hypotheses. The findings of the SEM analysis elucidate the positive and significant influence of tourist guides' professional competencies on the sustainable development of tourism. Additionally, the outcomes underscore the pivotal roles of professional competencies in shaping tourist satisfaction and service quality, with service quality further influencing tourist loyalty and destination image. These findings offer valuable insights to inform decision-makers and planners, aiding in the formulation of strategies aligned with the United Nations' sustainability objectives when orchestrating destination planning initiatives.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Sustainable Development, Destination Image, Loyalty, Service Quality

## Introduction

In recent decades, the tourism sector has experienced substantial growth, emerging as a pivotal force within global economies (Rasool et al., 2021). This growth has spurred scholarly interest in comprehensively examining its constituent elements. One such element, which has historically received less scrutiny, is the role of tourist guides. Stakeholders in numerous tourist destinations have increasingly recognized the significance of tour guides and the ramifications of their function (Gan et al., 2023). Sustainable development (SD) constitutes a cornerstone for the prosperity of any enterprise, characterized by a holistic approach that encompasses cultural, environmental, social, and economic dimensions (Lee & Xue, 2020). SD assumes critical importance in addressing both current and future needs. Within this framework, sustainable tourism emerges as a subset of SD, characterized by its consideration of the comprehensive impacts on the environment, society, and economy, while concurrently addressing the interests of local communities, industries, and visitors (Akhter et al., 2023).

The fundamental objective of sustainable tourism is to mitigate the adverse impacts of tourism while leveraging its economic and societal benefits. This entails a primary focus on the preservation of indigenous cultures, biodiversity conservation, and environmental stewardship (Baloch et al., 2023), alongside the adherence to ethical principles. Within the realm of tourism, several predictors are pertinent, encompassing trustworthiness, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), destination image (DI), loyalty (LOY), satisfaction (SAT), and service quality (SQ). SQ serves as a pivotal metric for evaluating an organization's performance in delivering promised services (Akhter et al., 2023). Scholars assert that SQ plays a critical role in customer retention, profitability, client satisfaction, and overall business success. It reflects tourists' perceptions of the services provided by service providers relative to the expenditure incurred. From the tourists' standpoint, the services rendered by tourism companies and hotels significantly influence the cultivation of positive intentions among customers (Demirović Bajrami et al., 2020). Another crucial determinant in the tourism domain is customer SAT. Various factors within the tourism industry influence customers' SAT, which in turn accrues several benefits for organizations.

Customer SAT embodies the psychological state achieved when customers' needs and expectations regarding products or services are met. In the tourism industry, customer SAT stands as a pivotal aspect of SQ (Zainudin et al., 2018).

Customer retention holds paramount importance across various industries, and its significance resonates strongly within the tourism sector. LOY within tourism delineates the commitment of customers to a particular destination. SAT stands as a critical determinant of organizational success (Laškarin Ažić et al., 2020). Entities operating within the tourism sector can optimize cost reduction and revenue augmentation by fostering customer loyalty (Karim & Rabiul, 2022), thereby necessitating a strategic focus on nurturing enduring relationships with tourists. Travel decisions of tourists are substantially influenced by customer loyalty, emphasizing its pivotal role in shaping travel plans and, consequently, underscoring its significance for organizations amidst escalating industry competition (Wang & Li, 2023). When contemplating travel decisions, customers invariably consider the perceived image of destinations. Destination image (DI) encapsulates the collective impression of a destination among individuals (Wang et al., 2023). The cultivation of positive word-of-mouth regarding destinations hinges significantly on DI, elucidating its crucial role. Indeed, the actions of tourists are profoundly influenced by DI, affirming its status as a pivotal aspect within the tourism sector (Huang et al., 2021).

Despite the pivotal role tourist guides play within the tourism sector, existing studies on this subject remain insufficient, lacking comprehensive coverage of all potential aspects and relationships. Recognizing the significance of tour guides in tourism, previous research has concentrated on examining select relationships pertaining to tour guide performance. Consequently, this study endeavours to evaluate the impact of PC of tour guides, SQ, tourist SAT, LOY, and DI on tourism SD.

### **Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development**

#### **Tourist Professional Competency Relationship with Service Quality: Customer Satisfaction**

The proficiency of tourist guides significantly influences the knowledge acquisition and emotional responses of visitors. Researchers have investigated the

impact of tourist guide competency on tourist behaviour, highlighting its pivotal role in shaping customer knowledge (Demirović Bajrami et al., 2020). Tourist guides serve as instrumental agents in enhancing customer knowledge, thereby influencing tourist behavior (Alrawadieh et al., 2020). Studies have demonstrated that the quality of tour guide services not only contributes to financial gains for travel agencies but also enhances the image of tourist destinations. Scholars such as Látková et al. (2020) contend that the performance of tour guides shapes tourists' perceptions of the commercial image of travel agencies. Additionally, Balıkoğlu and Tetik Dinç (2022) assert that the PC of tourist guides constitute an indispensable element of the tourism product, impacting both the quality of the tourism product and tourists SAT. Furthermore, research underscores the pivotal role of tour guides in facilitating the sustainable operations of package tour operators.

Tourist guides with a commendable reputation consistently endeavour to immerse tourists in the local customs and attractions, thereby augmenting customers' knowledge and leaving a positive impression on their minds. Consequently, tourists experience a sense of relaxation and satisfaction. Research conducted by Syakier and Hanafiah (2022) unveiled a positive correlation between tourist guide proficiency and customer SAT. Similarly, Surahman et al. (2020) corroborated these findings, indicating a significant influence of tourist guides on both SQ and customer satisfaction. Moreover, they highlighted the impact of tourist guide qualifications on customer SAT, emphasizing the importance of effective communication skills possessed by qualified guides in fostering customer loyalty (Syakier & Hanafiah, 2022). Additionally, Li et al. (2021) and Seyitoğlu (2020) conducted studies examining the influence of tour guide professional competencies on the quality of services provided and tourists' satisfaction.

**H1.** *Tourist guide's PC have a direct significant impact on SQ of tour guiding services.*

**H2.** *Tourist guide's PC have a direct significant impact on tourists' SAT.*

### **Impact of Tourist Professional Competency on Sustainable Tourism Development**

A tour guide is characterized as an individual who leads tourists, whether singularly or in groups, during visits to historical, cultural, and natural landmarks within tourist destinations, facilitating communication by translating into a language

comprehensible to the tourists or visitors. [Agyeman and Antwi-Bosiako \(2022\)](#) underscored the pivotal role of tour guides as the most dynamic cohort within the tourism sector, directly engaging and communicating with tourists. Concurrently, [Mustafa et al. \(2022\)](#) delineated the multifaceted roles assumed by tour guides in delivering tourism services, encompassing coordination, provision of information, exploration, entertainment, and dissemination of knowledge. Furthermore, some scholars highlighted the paramount significance of tour guides within the tourism industry, regarding them as pivotal human capital assets crucial for realizing the industry's objectives.

Professional competence encompasses the possession of requisite knowledge, attributes, characteristics, and skills by specialists, enabling them to effectively execute professional duties and apply them proficiently at an elevated level ([Zhienbayeva et al., 2019](#)). Hence, scholars affirm that professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes constitute fundamental attributes for comprehending professional competence ([Hämäläinen et al., 2021](#)). In order to foster sustainable tourist destinations, informed engagement from all stakeholders, including political leadership, is imperative. Organizations striving for sustainable tourism must prioritize ongoing efforts entailing significant corrective and preventive measures, as well as the monitoring of diverse impacts and continuous evaluation. Maintaining a high level of customer SAT is essential for ensuring sustainable tourism practices ([Khan et al., 2021](#)).

Sustainable tourism primarily addresses critical factors such as socially and ethically responsible business practices within the tourism industry, offering citizens opportunities for both tourism engagement and employment within this sector, while simultaneously safeguarding cultural integrity and integrating environmental protection measures. There is an imperative to adhere rigorously to foundational principles for the advancement of sustainable tourism ([Streimikiene et al., 2021](#)). To foster sustainable tourism development, it is essential to enact principles of sustainable tourism, which encompass promoting cultural understanding, fostering cultural tolerance, preserving cultural heritage and traditional values, conserving biodiversity, and contributing to environmental preservation ([Lerario, 2022](#)). Additionally, research by [Hamdy et al. \(2024\)](#) indicated that the expertise of tourist guides significantly

impacts the sustainability of destination image in sustainable tourism. Similarly, [Pereira et al. \(2022\)](#) reported comparable findings, demonstrating the positive influence of trained tourists on sustainable tourist destinations.

**H3.** *Tourist guide's PC have a direct significant impact on tourism SD.*

### **Service Quality Relationship with Satisfaction, Tourist LOY & DI**

[Parasuraman et al. \(1988\)](#) conceptualized SQ as the perceptual gap between customers' evaluations of the services received and their initial expectations. SQ represents customers' overall assessment of service adequacy or excellence. Numerous studies have consistently affirmed the direct influence of provided SQ on tourist SAT and tourist LOY, as evidenced by research conducted by ([Thi et al., 2020](#)), ([Surahman et al., 2020](#)), ([Govindarajo & Khen, 2020](#)), ([Gogoi, 2020](#)), and ([Aljumaha et al., 2020](#)).

Customer LOY can be gauged through various means, such as expressing favourable sentiments about the received services or actively advocating for others to utilize the same services. When tourists have positive experiences with their destinations, they are more inclined to revisit in the future and spread positive word-of-mouth about the destination ([Nurita & Sukresna, 2022](#)). Research indicates that SQ serves as a fundamental precursor to both loyalty (LOY) and destination image. International tourists place significance on the services provided by hotels ([Gogoi, 2020](#)).

SQ significantly influences the cultivation of favourable responses from customers. When customers perceive the performance of services provided by the service provider to exceed their expectations, it is highly probable that they will form positive impressions of the tourist location in question ([Jeong & Kim, 2020](#)). [Govindarajo and Khen \(2020\)](#) demonstrated in their research that SQ factors contribute to enhancing the DI within tourism. Similarly, [Aljumaha et al. \(2020\)](#) revealed a positive impact of SQ on customer LOY. Conversely, [Wantara and Irawati \(2021\)](#) found that the SQ of tour guiding services positively affects customer SAT.

**H4.** *SQ of tour guiding services has a direct significant impact on tourists' SAT.*

**H5.** *SQ of tour guiding services has a direct significant impact on tourists' LOY.*

**H6.** *SQ of tour guiding services has a direct significant impact on DI.*

## Tourist Satisfaction Relationship with Tourist Loyalty & Destination Image

Gajewska et al. (2020) conceptualized SAT as the comprehensive evaluation level that a customer provides for the product or service acquired, juxtaposed with the anticipated quality of the product or service prior to acquisition. In a similar vein, various scholars have expounded upon the definition of tourist satisfaction, such as (Bayih & Singh, 2020), who delineated it as the degree of enjoyment derived by tourists during their tourism experience, stemming from the fulfilment of their prior desires and expectations regarding the tourism product. Studies have identified the determinants of tourist satisfaction to include SQ, perceived value, mental image, associated risks, and incurred costs.

Research has consistently established a correlation between tourism performance within a destination, tourist SAT, and their behavioural intention. It is widely acknowledged that tourists' satisfaction is an outcome directly influenced by the quality of tourism services provided. Zhou and Yu (2022) focused on substantiating the mediating role of SAT in the relationship between tourism engagement and tourist LOY towards the destination. Venkat (2007) documented the notable impact of SAT on destination loyalty. Likewise, scholars have contended that one of the primary factors in fostering loyalty among customers is the perception of the destination's image..

**H7.** *Tourists' satisfaction has a direct significant impact on tourists' LOY.*

**H8.** *Tourists' satisfaction has a direct significant impact on DI.*

## Destination Image on Loyalty and Tourist Sustainable Development

Tourist DI encompasses the entirety of an individual's beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and perceptions concerning the tourist destination (Moustaka & Constantoglou, 2021). Numerous prior investigations have scrutinized and dissected the factors influencing the formation of a tourist destination's image, while also assessing the impact of this image on various variables. Huete Alcocer and López Ruiz (2020) underscored the robust association between DI and tourist SAT. Additional studies have indicated that DI serves as a pivotal precursor affecting tourist LOY towards the destination (Saragih & Taufik, 2020). Furthermore, Shishito et al. (2022) alongside Kim et al. (2022) affirmed that destination image influences travellers' choice.

Image represents the perception held by customers regarding the DI. The future decisions made by customers about a product are often based on the perceptions developed from their experiences. [Indarto et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Diputra and Yasa \(2021\)](#) noted that a positive image significantly influences customer LOY. Scholars have underscored the significant role tourists play in shaping the DI, which in turn is a crucial determinant of destination SD [Shishito et al. \(2022\)](#). [Lee and Xue \(2020\)](#) proposed that DI has a noteworthy effect on fostering sustainability.

Drawing from an exhaustive examination of the literature outlined above, and in alignment with the available resources, the ensuing hypotheses can be posited:

**H9.** *DI has a positive impact on tourists' LOY.*

**H10.** *DI has a direct positive impact on tourism SD.*

### **Tourist Loyalty and Tourist Sustainable Development**

Numerous inquiries have delved into the notion of tourist LOY towards a tourist destination. [Krishnan \(2021\)](#) delineated it as the maintenance of a steadfast relationship with the product, exemplified by a continual readiness for repeat purchases, while [\(Ramesh & Jaunky, 2021\)](#) characterized a loyal customer as one who consistently demonstrates commitment to any brand or retailer. Tourists exhibiting loyalty to a destination represent a pivotal segment for marketers and decision-makers within tourist destinations. They are inclined to prolong their stay in the tourist destination, demonstrating resilience against situational influences, while also incurring lower marketing costs compared to acquiring new customers. Moreover, they are predisposed to disseminating positive information about the tourist destination ([Wang & Li, 2023](#)).

[Hajian and Kashani \(2021\)](#) expounded upon SD as the fulfilment of present and future generations' needs. [Purnamawati \(2021\)](#), from a tourism standpoint, delineated sustainable tourism as the comprehensive management and development of tourism endeavours aimed at preserving the natural, economic, and social integrity while safeguarding natural and cultural resources. This entails the imperative to strike a harmonious balance across the three dimensions of sustainability—environmental, economic, and social—to ensure its enduring viability. Sustainable tourism development has emerged as a subject of paramount significance, garnering extensive



scrutiny and analysis over recent decades (Streimikiene et al., 2021). Notably, there is a dearth of studies exploring the impact or role of tour guides in facilitating sustainable tourism development. For instance, the provision of satisfactory services by tourist guides is commonly regarded as a pivotal strategy for attaining the SD of a destination. The study conducted by Tătar et al. (2018) investigates the extent to which tourist guides contribute to fostering sustainability in Romania.

Customer LOY stands as a pivotal behavioural aspect among tourists, underscoring the imperative of comprehending the determinants shaping loyalty among customers. DI assumes a significant role in shaping customer LOY (Kusdiby, 2022). Service providers within the tourism sector consistently strive to foster customer loyalty to ensure the sustainability of destinations. Zakiah et al. (2023) demonstrated in their research the positive impact of visitor LOY on the sustainability of tourism destinations.

**H11.** *Tourists' LOY has a direct significant impact on tourism SD.*

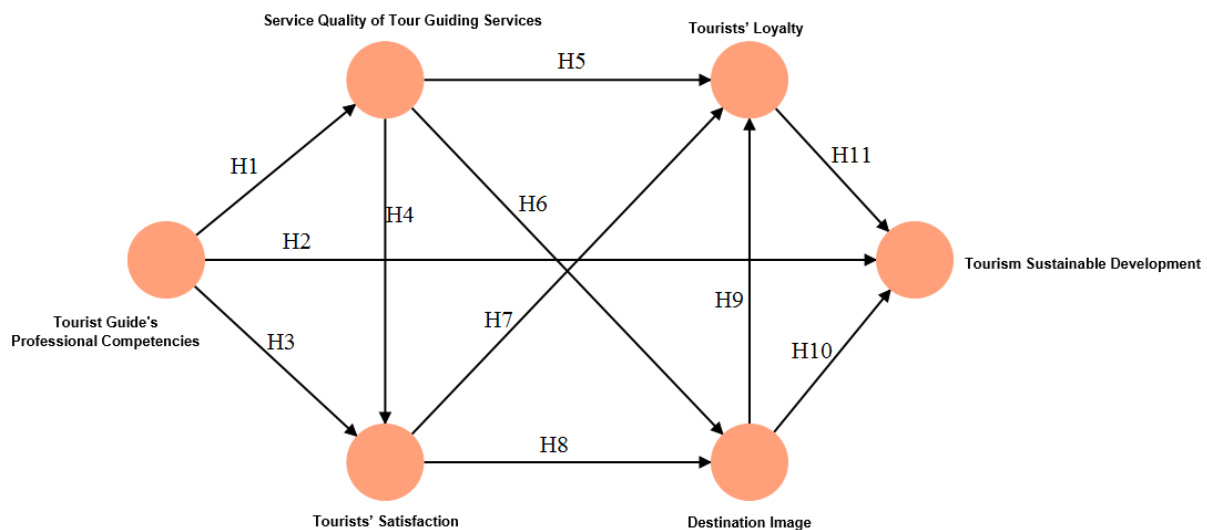


Figure 1. The Suggested Theoretical Model

## Methodology (Materials and Methods)

### The Scale and the Study Construct

The measurement scale employed to assess the variables in the present study was constructed based on an extensive review of the literature. Tourist guides' PC were evaluated using a set of 6 items adapted from (Lin et al., 2017), encompassing knowledge of the travel business, communication skills, language fluency, honesty, first-aid proficiency, and ability to

manage tourists' emotions. Tourists' SAT was gauged through 8 items sourced from [Chang \(2014\)](#), [Lin et al. \(2017\)](#), [Hwang and Lee \(2019\)](#), and [Zhou and Yu \(2022\)](#), including indicators such as satisfaction, delight, alignment with travel needs, positive experience, perceived wisdom in joining the trip, exceeding expectations, overall satisfaction with tour guide services, and intention to participate in future trips. Tourists' LOY was measured via 5 items derived from [Zhou and Yu \(2022\)](#), capturing intentions to revisit, convey positive sentiments about the destination, recommend it to others, likelihood of future visits, and willingness to recommend it to others with travel plans. SQ of tour guiding services was assessed using 5 items adopted from [Lin et al. \(2017\)](#), addressing the friendliness of service, clarity and organization of explanations, responsiveness to requests, dedication, and overall satisfaction with tour guiding services. DI was evaluated through 8 items sourced from [Hudson et al. \(2011\)](#), covering aspects such as comfort, security, natural beauty, tourism facilities, climate, cultural richness, affordability, and language accessibility. Lastly, tourism SD was measured using 5 items adapted from [Sidali et al. \(2017\)](#) and [Tătar et al. \(2018\)](#), encompassing beliefs regarding the preservation of tourism resources for future generations, recommendations for alternative attractions to protect fragile resources, environmental consciousness during guiding services, endorsement of sustainable and eco-friendly products, and advice against harming the environment. All variables exhibited high reliability, with values exceeding 0.90.

### **Population and Sample Size**

The study targets tourists as its population of interest. According to Egypt's Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics ([Capmas, 2022](#)), the tourist influx to Egypt in 2022 reached 11.7 million individuals. Employing Herbert Larkin's sample size formula, the appropriate representative sample size for this study was determined to be 384 individuals ([Ayad, 2017](#)). Simple random sampling was employed to select respondents.

### **Data Collection**

For this study, a quantitative methodology was employed, utilizing a self-administered questionnaire to gather primary data from tourists. A panel of tourism experts and academic professionals reviewed and refined the questionnaire. Distribution of the questionnaire occurred among 635 tourists between January and

April 2023. Ultimately, 624 completed questionnaires were obtained and subjected to statistical analysis, yielding a response rate of 98.3%. The questionnaire comprised seven sections designed to address the study's objectives. The initial section focused on collecting demographic information, while the subsequent six sections pertained to the investigation of six variables: tourist guides' PC, SQ of tour guiding services, tourists' SAT, tourists' LOY, DI, and tourism SD. Respondents were instructed to evaluate all items within each variable using a 5-point Likert scale.

### Analysis Techniques

SPSS and PLS-4 were employed for data analysis in this study. SPSS was utilized for demographic analysis, while PLS-4 was employed to evaluate the hypotheses.

## Analysis and Result

### Measurement Model (Outer Model)

#### Convergent Validity

To ascertain the construct reliability and validity of the model, convergent validity was assessed. All individual item reliability outcomes exceeded 0.7, aligning with the recommendation by (Hair Jr et al., 2017). Moreover, the composite reliability (CR) values for all variables surpassed the threshold of 0.7, as suggested by (Jian et al., 2020) and (Hair Jr et al., 2017). Additionally, in accordance with the guidelines proposed by (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) presented in Table 1, the values of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeded 0.50.

Table 1. Results of Measurement Model - Convergent Validity

Construct	Item	Loading	AVE	CR
Tourist Guides' Professional Competencies <a href="#">Lin et al. (2017)</a>	PC2	0.896	0.851	0.958
	PC3	0.93		
	PC4	0.929		
	PC5	0.935		
	SQ1	0.765		
Service Quality of Tour Guiding Services <a href="#">Lin et al. (2017)</a>	SQ2	0.883	0.664	0.908
	SQ3	0.775		
	SQ4	0.818		
	SQ5	0.827		
	TS1	0.892		

Tourists' Satisfaction Chang (2014); Zhou and Yu (2022)	TS2	0.873		
	TS4	0.904	0.751	0.938
	TS5	0.744		
	TS7	0.909		
Tourists' Loyalty Zhou and Yu (2022)	TL1	0.849		
	TL2	0.818		
	TL3	0.898	0.745	0.936
	TL4	0.835		
	TL5	0.911		
Destination Image (Hudson et al., 2011)	DI1	0.88		
	DI2	0.928		
	DI3	0.948		
	DI4	0.902		
	DI5	0.736	0.77	0.964
	DI6	0.958		
	DI7	0.902		
	DI8	0.736		
Tourism Sustainable Development Sidali et al. (2017) and Tatar et al. (2018)	SD1	0.962		
	SD2	0.911	0.931	0.772
	SD3	0.779		
	SD4	0.853		

### Discriminant Validity:

To establish discriminant validity of the model, it is essential to verify that all constituent variables within the model exhibit differentiation from each other. This practice enhances the confidence level in the outcomes and interpretations derived from the model (Hair Jr et al., 2017). To accomplish this, the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion and cross-loadings approaches were employed. Please refer to Tables 2 and 3, and Figure 2 for detailed findings.

Table 2. Latent Variables Correlations (Fornell-Larcker criterion)

Construct	D. I.	P. C.	S. Q.	S. D.	T. L.	T. S.
Destination Image	<b>0.878</b>					
Professional Competencies	0.784	<b>0.923</b>				
Service Quality of Tour Guiding Services	0.718	0.76	<b>0.899</b>			
Sustainable Development	0.364	0.521	0.58	<b>0.879</b>		
Tourists' Loyalty	0.742	0.775	0.699	0.493	<b>0.863</b>	
Tourists' Satisfaction	0.77	0.537	0.712	0.383	0.544	<b>0.867</b>

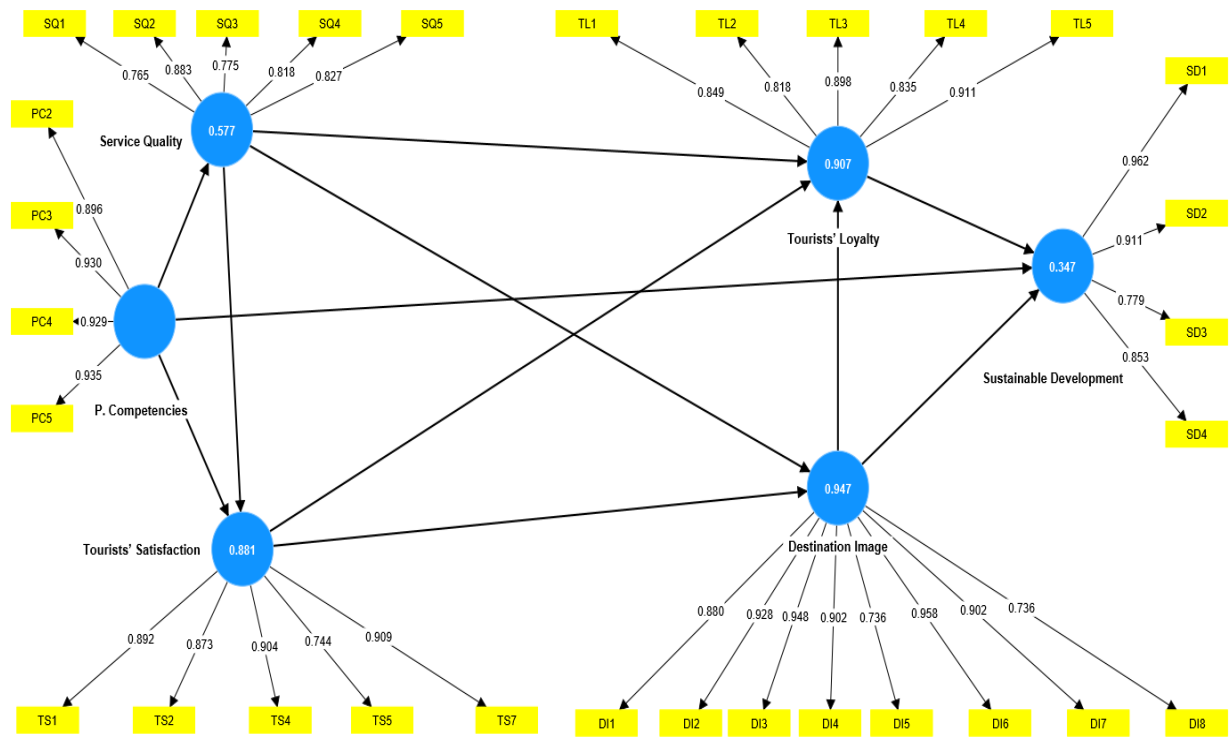
The findings presented in the preceding table indicate that each variable elucidates the variance of its respective items more effectively than the variance of items from other variables within the model. This substantiates the discriminant validity of the model, aligning with the recommendations put forth by (Fornell & Larcker, 1981)

and (Hair Jr et al., 2017).

Table 3. Discriminant Validity - Cross Loading

	Destination Image	P. Competencies	Service Quality	Sustainable Development	Tourists' Loyalty	Tourists' Satisfaction
DI1	<b>0.88</b>	0.322	0.282	0.357	0.212	0.292
DI2	<b>0.928</b>	0.512	0.236	0.224	0.237	0.204
DI3	<b>0.948</b>	0.207	0.232	0.218	0.355	0.295
DI4	<b>0.902</b>	0.351	0.317	0.366	0.236	0.333
DI5	<b>0.736</b>	0.344	0.465	0.42	0.299	0.234
DI6	<b>0.958</b>	0.215	0.348	0.231	0.463	0.307
DI7	<b>0.902</b>	0.451	0.317	0.366	0.236	0.333
DI8	<b>0.736</b>	0.344	0.465	0.42	0.299	0.234
PC2	0.503	<b>0.896</b>	0.245	0.213	0.233	0.293
PC3	0.37	<b>0.93</b>	0.276	0.357	0.301	0.387
PC4	0.305	<b>0.929</b>	0.473	0.229	0.363	0.476
PC5	0.266	<b>0.935</b>	0.278	0.343	0.295	0.294
SD1	0.214	0.436	0.443	<b>0.962</b>	0.375	0.241
SD2	0.268	0.398	0.459	<b>0.911</b>	0.415	0.276
SD3	0.445	0.297	0.338	<b>0.779</b>	0.431	0.407
SD4	0.415	0.219	0.275	<b>0.853</b>	0.22	0.456
SQ1	0.236	0.344	<b>0.765</b>	0.42	0.299	0.234
SQ2	0.309	0.216	<b>0.883</b>	0.295	0.349	0.392
SQ3	0.223	0.339	<b>0.775</b>	0.403	0.298	0.257
SQ4	0.277	0.225	<b>0.818</b>	0.402	0.316	0.239
SQ5	0.392	0.241	<b>0.827</b>	0.321	0.341	0.253
TL1	0.209	0.316	0.283	0.295	<b>0.849</b>	0.292
TL2	0.289	0.261	0.246	0.357	<b>0.818</b>	0.303
TL3	0.419	0.358	0.363	0.326	<b>0.898</b>	0.264
TL4	0.396	0.271	0.287	0.231	<b>0.835</b>	0.331
TL5	0.241	0.472	0.263	0.323	<b>0.911</b>	0.375
TS1	0.436	0.282	0.48	0.327	0.263	<b>0.892</b>
TS2	0.491	0.278	0.297	0.228	0.299	<b>0.873</b>
TS4	0.253	0.314	0.38	0.366	0.288	<b>0.904</b>
TS5	0.272	0.344	0.264	0.245	0.379	<b>0.744</b>
TS7	0.133	0.295	0.236	0.228	0.345	<b>0.909</b>

The findings depicted in the previous table demonstrate that the loadings of each item on its corresponding variable exceed its loadings on all other variables within the model. This substantiates the discriminant validity of the model, as advocated by (Chin, 1998).



### Structural Model (Inner Model)

### Coefficient of Determination (R<sup>2</sup>)

The coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) was employed to gauge the predictive capability of the model, specifically in predicting the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variable. The results for all variables surpassed the accepted threshold of 0.10, as delineated by (Falk & Miller, 1992). Furthermore, the criteria established by Chin (1998) were met, where R<sup>2</sup> values exceeding 0.67 are considered high, those ranging from 0.33 to 0.67 are deemed moderate, and values falling between 0.19 and less than 0.33 are classified as low. Please refer to Table 4 for detailed results.

Table 4. R<sup>2</sup> of the Endogenous Latent Variables

Constructs	R-Square	Results
Destination Image	0.947	High
Service Quality of Tour Guiding Services	0.577	Moderate
Tourism Sustainable Development	0.347	Moderate
Tourists' Loyalty	0.907	High
Tourists' Satisfaction	0.881	High

## Predictive Relevance ( $Q^2$ )

To evaluate the predictive adequacy of the model and ascertain its predictive relevance, the Blindfolding approach was employed. This approach aims to determine the model's capability to anticipate changes occurring in endogenous latent variables. As stipulated by (Wetzels, Odekerken-Schröder, & Van Oppen, 2009),  $Q^2$  values should exceed zero to indicate predictive relevance. The outcomes presented in [Table 5](#) demonstrate that all  $Q^2$  values within the model are greater than zero, thus confirming the model's predictive relevance.

Table 5. Predictive Relevance ( $Q^2$ ) Assessment for the Model

Constructs	SSO	SSE	$Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)$
Destination Image	140.079	58.223	0.584
Service Quality of Tour Guiding Services	142.44	60.586	0.575
Tourism Sustainable Development	132.189	62.442	0.527
Tourists' Loyalty	144.178	62.517	0.566
Tourists' Satisfaction	109.16	41.589	0.619

## Effect Size ( $f^2$ )

Following (Cohen, 2013) criteria, effect sizes were assessed. As indicated in [Table 6](#), all values surpass the minimum acceptable criterion of 0.02.

Table 6. Assessment of Effect Size ( $f^2$ )

Constructs	D. Image	S. Quality	S. Development	T. Loyalty	T. Satisfaction
Destination Image			0.011 No effect	0.015 No effect	
Professional Competencies		0.577 Large	0.025 Small		0.413 Large
Service Quality of Tour Guiding Services	0.129 Small			0.039 Small	0.513 Large
Tourists' Loyalty			0.012 No effect		
Tourists' Satisfaction	0.669 Large			0.164 Medium	

## Goodness of Fit of the Model (GoF)

The GOF test was employed to ascertain the reliability of the model proposed in this study as a comprehensive fit measurement model. This evaluation considers the

level of measurement, structure, and overall performance of the model, aligning with the framework outlined by (Chen, 2010).

$$GoF = \sqrt{R^2 \times AVE}$$

$$GoF = \sqrt{0.732 \times 0.785}$$

$$GoF = 0.758$$

The GoF test results indicate that, based on the criterion by (Wetzels, Odekerken-Schröder, & Van Oppen, 2009), the proposed model in this study demonstrates a satisfactory level of goodness of fit to be deemed sufficiently valid for a global PLS model.

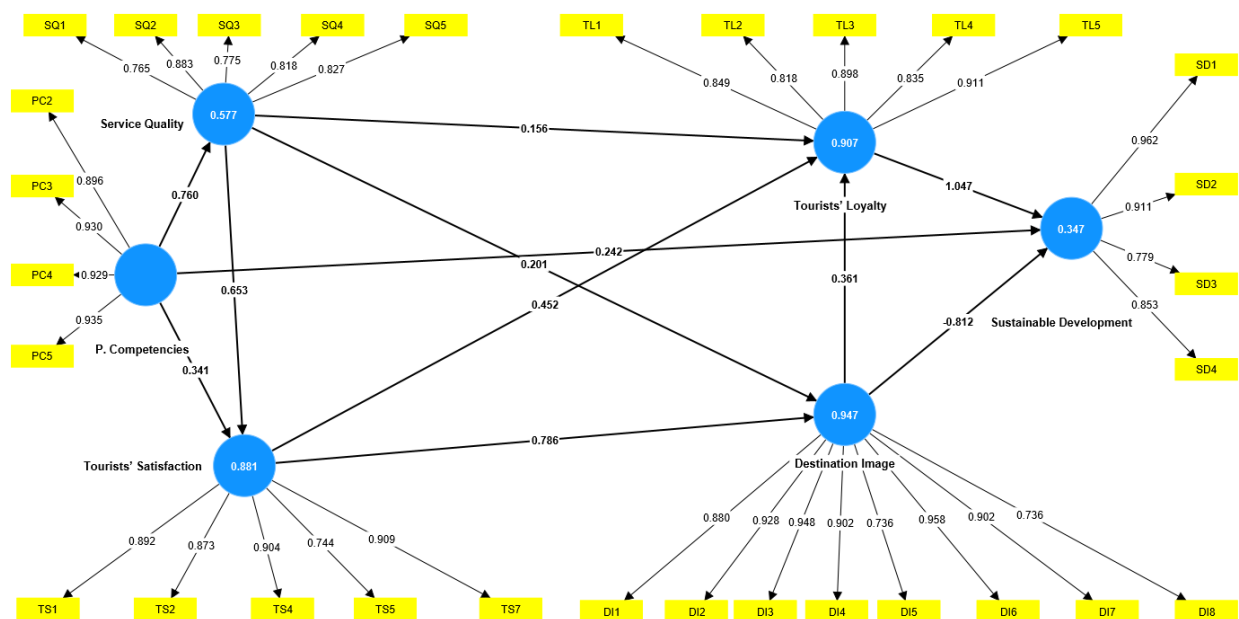


Figure 3. The Proposed Structural Equation Model

### Hypotheses Assessment (Significance of Path Coefficients)

A summary of all hypothesis testing results is provided in Table 7.

Table 7. Hypotheses Assessment

Hypothesis (Paths)	Effect	Std. Beta	Std. Error	T Value	P values	Results
H1: Professional Competencies -> Service Quality	Direct	0.76	0.021	35.452	0.000	Supported
H2: Professional Competencies ->Tourism Sustainable Development	Direct	0.242	0.081	2.976	0.003	Supported
H3: Professional Competencies -> Tourists' Satisfaction	Direct	0.341	0.026	13.328	0.000	Supported
H4: Service Quality -> Tourists' Satisfaction	Direct	0.653	0.025	26.255	0.000	Supported
H5: Service Quality -> Tourists' Loyalty	Direct	0.156	0.045	3.459	0.001	Supported



H6: Service Quality -> Destination Image	Direct	0.201	0.041	4.958	0.000	Supported
H7: Tourists' Satisfaction -> Tourists' Loyalty	Direct	0.452	0.078	5.792	0.000	Supported
H8: Tourists' Satisfaction -> Destination Image	Direct	0.786	0.039	19.965	0.000	Supported
H9: Destination Image -> Tourists' Loyalty	Direct	0.361	0.08	4.528	0.112	Not Supported
H10: Destination Image ->Tourism Sustainable Development	Direct	-0.812	0.139	5.856	0.228	Not Supported
H11: Tourists' Loyalty ->Tourism Sustainable Development	Direct	1.047	0.155	6.778	0.462	Not Supported

This study proposed 11 direct hypotheses (Figure 1). The structural equation model results (Tables 6 & 7, Figure 3) demonstrated that tourist guides' PC positively and significantly influenced SQ of tour guiding services (Effect size = 0.577, Std. Beta = 0.76,  $P = 0.000$ ), tourism SD (Effect size = 0.025, Std. Beta = 0.242,  $P < 0.05$ ), and tourists' SAT (Effect size = 0.413, Std. Beta = 0.341,  $P = 0.000$ ), thus supporting hypotheses H1, H2, and H3. Similarly, SQ of tour guiding services had a positive and significant impact on tourists' SAT (Effect size = 0.513, Std. Beta = 0.653,  $P = 0.000$ ), tourists' loyalty (Effect size = 0.039, Std. Beta = 0.156,  $P < 0.001$ ), and DI (Effect size = 0.129, Std. Beta = 0.201,  $P = 0.000$ ), confirming hypotheses H4, H5, and H6. Furthermore, tourists' SAT positively and significantly influenced tourists' LOY (Effect size = 0.164, Std. Beta = 0.452,  $P = 0.000$ ) and DI (Effect size = 0.669, Std. Beta = 0.786,  $P = 0.000$ ), thereby supporting hypotheses H7 and H8. However, DI had a positive insignificant impact on tourists' LOY (Effect size = 0.015, Std. Beta = 0.361,  $P = 0.112$ ), and a negative insignificant impact on tourism SD (Effect size = 0.011, Std. Beta = -0.812,  $P = 0.228$ ), leading to the rejection of hypotheses H9 and H10. Additionally, tourists' LOY had a positive insignificant impact on tourism SD (Effect size = 0.012, Std. Beta = 1.047,  $P = 0.462$ ), thus hypothesis H11 was not supported.

## Discussion

This study aims to explore the interconnectedness among tourists guides' PC, SQ of tour guiding services, tourist SAT, tourist LOY, DI, and tourism SD from the perspective of tourists. Leveraging an extensive literature review, the study thoroughly examines the relationships among these variables. Consequently, it offers a valuable contribution to the tourism literature by shedding light on and evaluating the influence

and significance of tourist guides' PC and SQ of tour guiding services within the tourism industry.

The findings of this study align closely with [Surahman et al. \(2020\)](#), who also identified a positive and significant impact of tourist guides' PC, albeit in relation to the overall quality of tourism services rather than specifically tour guiding services. These results may stem from various factors. A qualified individual often possesses superior communication skills, thus enhancing the perception of tourists regarding their effectiveness as guides. Consequently, respondents perceive qualified and skilled guides as valuable assets to the tourism industry, capable of providing comprehensive insights into cultural and heritage aspects of destinations.

Furthermore, the study revealed a positive and significant association between tourist guides' PC and tourists' SAT, echoing the findings of ([Syakier & Hanafiah, 2022](#)) who similarly established a link between tour guides' PC and tourists' satisfaction. This correlation may stem from the ability of trained and professional guides to effectively meet tourists' expectations and communicate adeptly, thereby enhancing comprehension of local culture and customs during tours. Similarly, the results indicated a positive and significant impact of tourist guides' PC on tourism SD, consistent with the findings of ([Pereira et al., 2022](#)). Respondents attributed this to skilled guides sharing their expertise with tourists and ensuring their safety and well-being, thereby contributing to an overall positive tourist experience. With such practices consistently implemented, the sustainable development of tourism is upheld.

The study highlights that SQ significantly influences tourists' SAT, aligning closely with findings by ([Wantara & Irawati, 2021](#)). Respondents attributed this to tour guides and tourism providers consistently meeting or even exceeding customer expectations, leading to lasting positive memories. Efficient and prompt services throughout the tour may also contribute to these findings.

The findings also validate that the quality of tour guiding services significantly impacts tourists' loyalty, echoing ([Thi et al., 2020](#)) findings on the direct influence of tour guides on tourist loyalty. Additionally, the quality of tour guiding services positively affects destination image, consistent with ([Govindarajo & Khen, 2020](#)) assertions regarding the repercussions of inadequate tour guide performance on

destination image. These results can be attributed to tourists receiving expected services from guides, fostering positive perceptions of the service provider and destination. Consequently, satisfied tourists serve as ambassadors for the tourism destination, contributing to increased loyalty.

Moreover, tourists' satisfaction significantly influences their loyalty, aligning with the findings of Venkat (2007). Additionally, tourists' satisfaction positively impacts destination image, contrary to previous research focusing on the effect of destination image on tourists' satisfaction. The rationale behind these results may lie in tourists' reported satisfaction with the received level of services, their delight with the comprehensive experience provided during the tour, and their overall positive perception of the destination. Participants expressed satisfaction with the decision to engage in the tour, highlighting that the services exceeded their expectations. Consequently, they exhibit loyalty towards the destination and develop a favourable image thereof. Furthermore, participants expressed their intent to recommend the destination to others and spread positive word-of-mouth, indicating their inclination to participate in future trips.

### **Conclusion, Limitations and Implications**

This study explored the relationships among tourists guides' PC, the quality of tour guiding SQ, tourist SAT, tourist LOY, DI, and tourism SD as perceived by tourists. The SEM results revealed significant positive impacts of tourist guide's PC on SQ, tourism SD, and SAT. Similarly, SQ had a positive effect on SAT, LOY, and DI. Additionally, SAT positively influenced LOY and DI. However, DI had an insignificant impact on LOY and a negative insignificant impact on tourism SD. Furthermore, LOY had an insignificant positive effect on tourism SD. These findings underscore the significant role of tourist guide's PC in various aspects of the tourism industry, particularly in achieving sustainability goals for tourist destinations. Such insights could aid decision-makers and planners in effectively strategizing for destination development and sustainability.

Similar to other empirical inquiries, the current study has several limitations. Firstly, data collection was confined to Egypt as the geographical region, suggesting a

need for future studies to broaden the sample to include tourists from the UAE, enhancing the generalizability of findings. Furthermore, the study solely examined the direct relationships proposed in the model, overlooking potential mediating pathways. Future research endeavours could explore and propose mediating mechanisms within the model. Additionally, the current model could benefit from discussing simple and sequential mediation across multiple relationships. Moreover, given the critical role of technology in fostering sustainability, the absence of any technology-related variables in the proposed model is notable. Thus, it is recommended that future studies consider incorporating variables such as artificial intelligence adoption as moderators within the proposed model.

The present research carries both practical and theoretical implications. Theoretically, it contributes by delineating factors within the tourism sector that are instrumental in fostering sustainability. It stands out among a limited body of literature by examining the effects of various aspects such as service quality, professionalism, and satisfaction on tourism destination sustainability. Additionally, it sheds light on the role of service quality in cultivating positive destination image and tourist loyalty. By addressing the gap in literature concerning factors influencing customer loyalty in the tourism sector, this study offers valuable insights. Furthermore, it bridges the research gap by discussing variables conducive to sustainability in the context of tourism. Practically, the study offers guidance to decision-makers in the tourism sector on cost minimization strategies and underscores the importance of cultivating a positive destination image to enhance customer loyalty. It underscores the significance of well-trained guides in customer retention and fostering positive perceptions among tourists. Furthermore, it emphasizes the pivotal role of tourists in delivering high-quality services. This research can serve as a valuable resource for training guides involved in tourist guidance. Finally, academicians can utilize these findings as a foundation for future research endeavours.

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