

The Influence of Service Customization and Interactive Tour Guides on Foreign Tourists' Willingness to Pay at Bali Tourist Destinations

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effect of service adjustments and interactive tour guides on foreign tourists' willingness to pay at Bali tourist destinations. The research adopts a quantitative approach using a sample of 150 foreign tourists selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected via structured questionnaires measured with a five-point Likert scale and analyzed using SPSS version 25. Statistical techniques included descriptive analysis, validity and reliability tests, classical assumption tests, and multiple linear regression analysis. The findings reveal that both service adjustments and interactive tour guides have significant and positive effects on foreign tourists' willingness to pay. The regression model shows that these two variables collectively explain 62.1% of the variation in tourists' willingness to pay. Service adjustments—such as cultural sensitivity, language flexibility, and personalized itineraries—enhance perceived value, while interactive guides contribute to emotional engagement and trust, thereby increasing payment intention. The study provides theoretical contributions by integrating service quality theory, customer value theory, and social exchange theory in explaining tourists' economic behavior. Practically, it offers strategic insights for tour operators and policymakers to enhance adaptive and interactive service quality to strengthen Bali's tourism competitiveness and sustainability.

Keywords: *Service Adjustment, Interactive Tour Guides, Willingness to Pay, Foreign Tourists, Bali Tourism.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism remains one of Indonesia's most vital economic sectors, with Bali standing as its premier global destination renowned for natural beauty, cultural heritage, and distinctive hospitality. As international travel continues to recover following the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, competition among tourist destinations has intensified, emphasizing the need for service innovation and quality improvement. Foreign tourists increasingly demand not only attractive sites but also personalized, interactive, and culturally responsive experiences. In this context, understanding the factors that influence their willingness to pay (WTP) becomes crucial for sustaining competitiveness and ensuring the long-term economic viability of Bali's tourism industry.

One of the key determinants of tourists' perceived value and willingness to pay is the degree of service adjustment provided by tourism operators. Service adjustment refers to the ability of tourism services to adapt to tourists' expectations, language, culture, and behavioral norms. According to [1], service customization directly enhances perceived value and satisfaction by aligning the service delivery process with individual preferences. In destinations such as Bali, where cultural diversity among visitors is high, adaptive services—such as multilingual guides, culturally sensitive hospitality, and flexible tour options—play a significant role in shaping the overall tourist experience.

Another critical element in influencing tourist satisfaction and WTP is the role of interactive tour guides. Tour guides are not merely information providers but act as cultural interpreters and experience facilitators. Studies by [2] and [3] emphasize that interactive communication between

guides and tourists fosters emotional engagement, trust, and learning satisfaction. When guides demonstrate empathy, responsiveness, and intercultural competence, tourists are more likely to perceive higher value in the service and express a greater willingness to pay premium prices for such experiences.

The concept of willingness to pay itself reflects the economic measure of perceived value and satisfaction. It indicates how much a tourist is prepared to spend for a particular experience or service level. Prior studies [4], [5] show that tourists' willingness to pay is strongly influenced by perceived quality, service interaction, and emotional connection to the destination. In Bali's case, where the tourism market is becoming increasingly segmented and experience-driven, identifying these determinants can guide service providers and policymakers in formulating strategies that enhance revenue without compromising cultural authenticity or visitor satisfaction.

Despite extensive research on tourism satisfaction and service quality, empirical evidence linking service adjustments, interactive tour guides, and foreign tourists' willingness to pay in the context of Bali remains limited. Most studies in Indonesia primarily focus on domestic tourism or general service quality assessment, leaving a gap in understanding the behavioral economics of international tourists. This study addresses that gap through a quantitative analysis of 150 foreign tourists visiting key destinations in Bali. Using Likert-scale measurements and data analysis with SPSS version 25, the research examines how adaptive services and interactive guide performance jointly influence tourists' willingness to pay, emphasizing the importance of both cultural adaptability and human interaction in shaping perceived value.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by integrating Service Quality Theory [6] and Customer Value Theory [7] within the framework of cross-cultural tourism behavior. Practically, it offers actionable insights for tour operators, local businesses, and policymakers in designing service strategies that enhance perceived value, foster engagement, and increase revenue potential. Through empirical validation, the study aims to answer three key questions: (1) To what extent do service adjustments influence foreign tourists' willingness to pay at Bali tourist destinations? (2) How does the interactivity of tour guides affect foreign tourists' willingness to pay? and (3) Do both variables jointly contribute to explaining variations in tourists' willingness to pay? By addressing these questions, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how adaptive and interactive service strategies can reinforce Bali's positioning as a world-class and sustainable tourism destination.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Service Adjustment in Tourism*

Service adjustment refers to the process by which service providers modify or adapt their offerings to align with the expectations, needs, and cultural backgrounds of their customers. In the tourism industry, this concept is critical because travelers come from diverse cultural and linguistic contexts. According to [1], service customization enhances perceived value by providing experiences that resonate with individual preferences, while [8] emphasize that service adaptation ensures flexibility in the delivery process, strengthening satisfaction and loyalty. In tourism destinations such as Bali, service adjustment includes various dimensions such as language accommodation, food preferences, schedule flexibility, and sensitivity toward religious and cultural practices. [9] found that adaptive service design positively influences tourists' perceived

quality and behavioral intentions, as seen in practices like multilingual tour guides, culturally appropriate gestures, and customized tour packages that make foreign tourists feel comfortable and valued. Empirical evidence from [10] further indicates that when tourists perceive that a service provider has tailored its offerings to their cultural and personal expectations, they are more likely to pay a premium. Thus, adaptive services not only enhance satisfaction but also create a sense of exclusivity and personalization that elevates the perception of economic value.

2.2 *Interactive Tour Guides and Tourist Experience*

Tour guides serve as the primary link between tourists and destinations, not only delivering factual information but also shaping emotional and cognitive experiences. According to [2], an interactive tour guide actively engages with tourists through two-way communication, empathy, and responsive storytelling, fostering positive emotions and enhancing satisfaction. [5] further emphasize that tour guides play multiple roles—as interpreters of culture, mediators of expectations, and creators of memorable experiences—where their ability to adapt communication styles to tourists’ interests determines the success of the tour. Supported by the Social Exchange Theory [11], mutual interaction between guides and tourists creates reciprocal value, where engagement and emotional connection enhance the perceived worth of the experience. Empirical research also highlights that interactive guide performance strengthens tourists’ perceived service quality and willingness to pay; [12] found that tourists who view guides as interactive and empathetic are more likely to revisit destinations and pay higher prices for similar tours. This underscores that the interpersonal dimension of service delivery is as crucial as the tangible aspects of the tourism experience.

2.3 *Willingness to Pay in Tourism*

Willingness to pay (WTP) is an economic indicator that reflects the extent to which consumers value a product or service, representing the maximum price an individual is willing to pay for a particular benefit or experience. In tourism research, WTP is widely used to assess perceived value, satisfaction, and destination competitiveness [13]. According to [6], perceived value is the consumer’s overall assessment of a product’s utility based on the trade-off between what is received and what is given, meaning that when tourists perceive that the quality of their experience exceeds the cost, their WTP increases. [14] emphasize that WTP serves as a behavioral outcome of satisfaction and perceived service excellence, while [4] note that in sustainable tourism, it also reflects tourists’ willingness to support environmental and cultural preservation efforts. In the context of Bali, WTP is influenced not only by price sensitivity but also by cultural immersion, service personalization, and emotional engagement. [5] found that tourists are willing to pay more for experiences that offer authenticity, comfort, and a sense of connection to local culture, positioning WTP as a valuable indicator of how effectively service providers meet or exceed international visitors’ expectations.

2.4 *Theoretical Framework*

This study integrates three main theoretical perspectives to explain the relationship among service adjustment, interactive tour guides, and willingness to pay. The first is Service Quality Theory (SERVQUAL) developed by [6], which identifies five dimensions of service quality—tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. This

study assumes that service adjustment and guide interactivity enhance perceived responsiveness and empathy, thereby improving overall service quality and influencing tourists' willingness to pay. The second is Customer Value Theory proposed by [1], which posits that perceived value represents the trade-off between what customers receive (benefits) and what they give up (costs). Both service adaptation and interactive communication enhance perceived benefits, thus elevating tourists' willingness to pay. The third is Social Exchange Theory [11], which explains that individuals engage in social interactions when they perceive positive returns from such exchanges. In the tourism context, interactive guides foster reciprocal emotional and informational relationships, making tourists feel enriched and more willing to pay for meaningful experiences.

H₁: Service adjustment has a positive and significant effect on foreign tourists' willingness to pay at Bali tourist destinations.

H₂: Interactive tour guides have a positive and significant effect on foreign tourists' willingness to pay at Bali tourist destinations.

H₃: Service adjustment and interactive tour guides simultaneously influence foreign tourists' willingness to pay at Bali tourist destinations.

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design aimed at examining the effect of service adjustments and interactive tour guides on foreign tourists' willingness to pay at Bali tourist destinations. A quantitative approach was selected to enable statistical measurement of relationships among variables and to ensure objectivity through numerical data analysis. The research adopts an explanatory causal design, as it seeks to identify cause-and-effect relationships between independent and dependent variables using inferential statistical techniques through SPSS version 25.

3.2 Population and Sample

The population in this study includes all foreign tourists visiting major destinations in Bali, such as Ubud, Kuta, Seminyak, Tanah Lot, and Uluwatu. The sample was determined using purposive sampling, with respondents selected based on specific criteria: they were foreign nationals aged 18 years and above, had participated in at least one guided tour in Bali within the past six months, and were able to communicate in English. A total of 150 valid respondents were obtained, which was considered sufficient according to the rule of thumb in multivariate analysis that recommends a minimum of 5–10 respondents per variable [15]. This sample size also provided adequate statistical power to support reliable and valid results in the multiple regression analysis.

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

Primary data were collected through the distribution of structured questionnaires to foreign tourists, administered both in printed form at major tourist attractions and via online survey links (Google Form) to ensure broader accessibility. The data collection process lasted for four weeks, during which respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality, and reminded that participation was entirely voluntary before completing the survey. The questionnaire comprised two main sections: the first section captured demographic information such as nationality, gender, age, education level, travel frequency, and expenditure level, while the second section contained measurement items related to the three research variables—service adjustment, interactive tour guides, and willingness to pay. Each item was assessed using a five-

point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree") to measure respondents' levels of agreement with the statements.

3.4 Variables and Measurement Indicators

This research involves three main variables: Service Adjustment (X_1), Interactive Tour Guides (X_2), and Willingness to Pay (Y). The first variable, Service Adjustment (X_1), measures how effectively tourism services adapt to the needs and cultural expectations of foreign tourists, with indicators adapted from [1], including adaptation of language and communication style, flexibility of service schedules and tour packages, cultural sensitivity and hospitality, and personalization of service experiences. The second variable, Interactive Tour Guides (X_2), captures the level of interpersonal interaction and engagement between guides and tourists, with indicators developed from [2], [3], such as communication clarity and empathy, responsiveness and friendliness, cultural knowledge and storytelling ability, and active engagement during tours. The third variable, Willingness to Pay (Y), reflects the extent to which tourists are willing to pay for tourism experiences they perceive as valuable, with indicators drawn from [5], [13], including willingness to pay higher prices for personalized services, perceived fairness between service quality and price, willingness to revisit or recommend the tour even at a higher cost, and perceived economic value of enhanced experiences.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

The data in this study were processed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 through several analytical stages. First, descriptive analysis was conducted to describe respondent characteristics and summarize responses for each variable in terms of mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage. Second, validity and reliability tests were performed, where the validity test used the Pearson Product-Moment correlation, with items considered valid if the correlation coefficient (r) exceeded the critical r -table value at a 0.05 significance level, and reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with variables deemed reliable if $\alpha \geq 0.70$ [15]. Third, classical assumption tests were carried out before regression analysis, including normality testing using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, multicollinearity testing using the Variance Inflation Factor ($VIF < 10$), and heteroscedasticity testing using the Glejser method to ensure compliance with linear regression assumptions. Fourth, multiple linear regression analysis was employed to test the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable, formulated in the regression equation. Finally, hypothesis testing was conducted using the t -test to examine the partial effect of each independent variable and the F -test to assess their simultaneous effect, with both accepted if the significance value (p -value) < 0.05 , while the coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to determine the proportion of variation in willingness to pay explained by the independent variables.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive Analysis of Respondents

A total of 150 valid responses were collected from foreign tourists visiting major destinations in Bali, including Kuta, Ubud, Seminyak, Tanah Lot, and Uluwatu. The demographic analysis revealed that 52% of respondents were male and 48% female, with 41% aged between 26–35 years, 34% aged 18–25 years, and the remaining 25% aged above 35 years. In terms of nationality, the majority of respondents came from Australia (28%), followed by Japan (19%), Germany (16%), France (15%), and other countries (22%). Most respondents had visited Bali more than once, with an average of 2.6 visits, indicating strong repeat visitation behavior. Their average daily spending ranged between USD 100–300, and the majority (63%) participated in organized tours with professional tour guides. These descriptive results reflect a diverse and representative sample of international tourists, providing sufficient variation in experience and purchasing behavior to support generalization of the study's findings.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Each variable in the study was measured using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 represented “strongly disagree” and 5 represented “strongly agree.” The descriptive analysis showed that the mean score for Service Adjustment (X_1) was 4.21 with a standard deviation of 0.52, categorized as high; Interactive Tour Guides (X_2) had a mean of 4.34 with a standard deviation of 0.47, categorized as very high; and Willingness to Pay (Y) had a mean of 4.07 with a standard deviation of 0.58, categorized as high. These results indicate that respondents generally perceived tourism services in Bali as highly adaptive, with excellent guide interactivity and strong willingness to pay. Overall, the findings suggest that Bali’s tourism service environment is already customer-oriented and culturally responsive, providing a solid foundation for sustaining positive payment intentions among foreign tourists.

4.3 Validity and Reliability Tests

The validity test using Pearson correlation showed that all questionnaire items had correlation coefficients greater than the critical value of $r = 0.161$ ($p < 0.05$), confirming that all indicators were valid and appropriately measured their respective constructs. The reliability test further demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach’s Alpha values of 0.879 for Service Adjustment (X_1), 0.864 for Interactive Tour Guides (X_2), and 0.891 for Willingness to Pay (Y). Since all coefficients exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019), the measurement instruments used in this study were considered reliable, consistent, and dependable for subsequent statistical analysis.

4.4 Classical Assumption Tests

Before performing the regression analysis, several classical assumption tests were conducted to ensure the accuracy and validity of the statistical model. The Normality Test using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov method produced a significance value of 0.200, which is greater than 0.05, indicating that the data were normally distributed. The Multicollinearity Test showed Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values of 1.532 for Service Adjustment (X_1) and 1.615 for Interactive Tour Guides (X_2), both of which are below the threshold of 10, suggesting that there was no multicollinearity problem among the independent variables.

Additionally, the Heteroscedasticity Test using the Glejser method showed that the significance values for both independent variables were greater than 0.05, indicating that heteroscedasticity was not present in the model. These results collectively confirm that the dataset met all the required assumptions for conducting multiple linear regression analysis, ensuring that the regression results would be statistically valid, unbiased, and reliable.

4.5 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

The regression model used in this study is as follows:

Table 1. Multiple Linear Regression

Variable	β (Coefficient)	t-count	Sig. (p-value)	Interpretation
Constant (α)	0.512	—	—	—
Service Adjustment (X_1)	0.366	4.912	0.000	Significant
Interactive Tour Guides (X_2)	0.425	5.336	0.000	Significant
$R^2 = 0.621$		$F = 73.512$ Sig = 0.000		

The regression analysis results show that both service adjustment ($\beta_1 = 0.366$, $p < 0.05$) and interactive tour guides ($\beta_2 = 0.425$, $p < 0.05$) have a significant and positive effect on foreign tourists’ willingness to pay at Bali tourist destinations. This finding indicates that improvements in adaptive service delivery and the quality of guide interactivity contribute meaningfully to increasing tourists’ perceived value and payment intentions. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.621$)

suggests that 62.1% of the variation in willingness to pay is explained by these two independent variables, while the remaining 37.9% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study, such as destination image, satisfaction, or travel motivation. These results highlight that service adjustment and interpersonal engagement are among the most influential aspects of tourists' behavioral and economic responses in Bali's tourism industry.

The results of the hypothesis testing further confirm the statistical significance of the model. For H_1 , service adjustment has a positive and significant effect on willingness to pay, as indicated by $t\text{-count} = 4.912 > t\text{-table} (1.976)$ and $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, leading to the acceptance of H_1 . For H_2 , interactive tour guides also have a positive and significant effect on willingness to pay, supported by $t\text{-count} = 5.336 > t\text{-table} (1.976)$ and $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, confirming H_2 . Meanwhile, for H_3 , the simultaneous test shows that both independent variables jointly influence willingness to pay, with $F\text{-count} = 73.512 > F\text{-table} (3.06)$ and $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, thereby accepting H_3 . These findings collectively validate that adaptive service strategies and interactive guide performance play crucial and complementary roles in enhancing foreign tourists' willingness to pay in Bali.

Discussion

The findings confirm that service adjustment significantly affects foreign tourists' willingness to pay, reinforcing the notion that adaptive and culturally sensitive services can enhance tourists' perceived fairness and spending behavior. This result supports the study of [13], who emphasized that flexibility and cultural awareness in service delivery positively influence tourists' perceptions of value. In the context of Bali's tourism industry, practices such as language accommodation, customized tour schedules, and respect for local cultural norms create a sense of belonging and comfort among international visitors. According to [1], perceived service value increases when providers align their offerings with customer expectations, and the present study confirms that tourists are more willing to pay premium prices when they experience personalized attention and cultural understanding. This demonstrates that service customization is not merely a marketing strategy but a value-creation mechanism that strengthens both customer satisfaction and the economic sustainability of Bali's tourism sector.

The second key finding reveals that interactive tour guides exert a stronger positive influence on willingness to pay than service adjustment. This aligns with previous studies by [3], [5], which found that interpersonal communication, empathy, and active engagement are crucial in shaping tourists' emotional experiences. In Bali's cultural tourism setting, guides play an essential role as interpreters of tradition and mediators of cultural understanding. When a tour guide demonstrates empathy, humor, and storytelling ability, they not only deliver information but also cultivate emotional satisfaction and authenticity. Viewed through the lens of Social Exchange Theory [11], these interactions form reciprocal relationships where both the guide and tourist gain intangible benefits such as knowledge, enjoyment, and emotional connection. As a result, tourists are more inclined to express their appreciation through higher payment intentions, positive reviews, and repeat visits.

The combined influence of both variables—service adjustment and interactive communication—indicates that these dimensions work synergistically to create a seamless and memorable tourism experience. This finding supports Service Quality Theory [6], which identifies responsiveness and empathy as key components of perceived service excellence. The coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.621 demonstrates that these two factors collectively explain a substantial portion of tourists' economic behavior. In practice, enhancing both operational flexibility and the interactivity of guides can significantly elevate the overall perceived value of the tourism experience. For instance, when personalized itineraries are paired with engaging storytelling and emotional connection, tourists perceive their journey as not only enjoyable but also meaningful—an experience they are willing to pay more for.

Managerial Implications

The results of this study have important practical implications for tour operators, destination managers, and policymakers in Bali. Tour operators should prioritize cross-cultural training programs for tour guides that emphasize interactive communication, empathy, and storytelling techniques to enhance visitor engagement. Service providers are encouraged to continuously adapt their offerings to align with tourist preferences by utilizing feedback mechanisms and digital platforms for real-time service improvement. Meanwhile, destination management organizations (DMOs) can incorporate these insights into strategic tourism planning to ensure that cultural authenticity, personalized experiences, and service adaptability remain key elements of Bali's competitive advantage in the global tourism market.

Theoretical Contributions

Theoretically, this study validates the integration of Service Quality Theory, Customer Value Theory, and Social Exchange Theory in explaining tourist behavior. It demonstrates that willingness to pay is not only a result of economic calculation but also a reflection of emotional and experiential satisfaction. The findings enrich the tourism literature by empirically linking service adaptability and interactive communication to monetary behavior in an international destination context.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that service adjustments and interactive tour guides are significant determinants of foreign tourists' willingness to pay at Bali's major tourist destinations. The empirical findings confirm that when tourism services are tailored to cultural expectations, language preferences, and personal comfort, tourists perceive greater value and demonstrate a higher propensity to pay premium prices. Among the examined factors, the role of interactive tour guides emerged as the most influential predictor, underscoring the importance of interpersonal communication, empathy, and storytelling in shaping meaningful and memorable travel experiences. The regression analysis further reveals that 62.1% of the variation in tourists' willingness to pay can be explained by the combined effects of service adjustment and interactive guide performance, highlighting the close interdependence between adaptive service systems and human interaction in influencing perceived value. From a managerial perspective, these results suggest that tourism operators should invest in continuous service innovation—such as multilingual customer support, flexible itineraries, and real-time digital feedback mechanisms—while also enhancing guide training programs centered on communication skills, cross-cultural competence, and emotional engagement.

From a theoretical standpoint, this research strengthens the integration of Service Quality Theory, Customer Value Theory, and Social Exchange Theory in explaining the dynamics of international tourism behavior. It demonstrates that tourists' economic decisions, as reflected in their willingness to pay, are driven not only by tangible elements of service quality but also by intangible factors such as emotional connection and relational value. In conclusion, fostering a synergy between adaptive service practices and interactive communication is vital for maintaining Bali's reputation as a world-class tourism destination. By aligning service innovation with cultural empathy and meaningful guide interaction, tourism stakeholders can enhance visitor satisfaction, drive higher economic returns, and contribute to the long-term goal of sustainable tourism development in Indonesia.

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