

## Article

# The Perceived Value and Future Behavioral Intentions in Ecotourism: A Study in the Mediterranean Natural Parks from Spain

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**Abstract:** Ecotourism is becoming increasingly important in natural parks because it raises the value of the environment for the visitor. The present study aimed to (i) establish the factors of the perceived value in ecotourism and (ii) analyze the predictive relationships of the dimensions of the perceived value with the satisfaction and loyalty of ecotourists. The study was carried out in the Albufera Natural Park and the Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park, two protected areas in the Mediterranean area of Spain. The sample collected in situ consisted of 349 valid questionnaires. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA), a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and multiple regression techniques were performed for data analysis. The results established three dimensions in the perceived value: functional and emotional, economic, and social, being the “functional and emotional” value the most significant predictor of satisfaction and loyalty of ecotourists. The findings will allow institutions to have a management guide for protected areas.

**Keywords:** ecotourism; perceived value; loyalty; natural parks



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## 1. Introduction

In the tourism industry, ecotourism is growing faster than other types of tourism [1] and is motivating people who like to be surrounded by nature. Ecotourists are predisposed to abide by the standards of protection of the environment and space in which they carry out their recreational activities [2]. The development of ecotourism has contributed to sustainable tourism and has become a market phenomenon different from the traditional one [3]. In fact, in the last 20 years, sustainable environmental development and the growth of ecotourism are issues that have generated concern [4,5]. Then, for this activity to become sustainable tourism, preventive and remediable measures must be developed to reduce the risk of a more significant negative impact [6,7]. However, it is evident that the increase in tourists visiting ecotourism destinations can generate actions that cause damage to ecosystems [8].

In this field, the United Nations declaration was fundamental, declaring 2002 “International Year of Ecotourism,” which made it easier for many tour operators to use “Ecotourism” as a mark of authenticity in the market segment [9]. Some forms of ecotourism include elements such as agriculture, wildlife, adventure, nature, and culture [10,11]. In this way, community ecotourism, in addition to emphasizing the conservation of the environment, also gives importance to improving the well-being of the local population, so the preservation of culture is fundamental [12–14].

Ecotourism should become the gateway to the economic development of rural communities [15]. Therefore, ecotourism provides a series of solutions for different areas

such as sustainable economic, social and environmental development and also promotes cultural and natural diversity [16]. In this sense, protected areas should contribute to fun through leisure activities while prioritizing the sustainability of the geographic space that is part of the destination's tourist heritage in order to contribute positively to the tourist experience [17,18]. In such circumstances, the offer of destinations is based on their natural resources, which have the challenge of maintaining their sustainability. Due to the increased flow of tourists who travel attracted by natural spaces, responsibly ecological areas are prioritized for their trips [17].

The conduct of visitors to protected areas is related to various aspects of behavior, such as perceived value. This term is described as the act of evaluating tourists for the price, quality, service, emotions, benefits, and social factors of the trip [19]. Likewise, as a construct of the differentiation between economic, social, and relational benefits that the tourist receives and the sacrifices that the tourist delivers, such as price, time, effort, risk, and convenience [20,21]. This is why the concept of perceived value is widely used for analysis and understanding [22]. Therefore, perceived value produces positive results for satisfaction and behavioral intentions [23,24]. On the other hand, Adam et al. [25] mentioned that in eco-tourism, there are specific motivations that lead to satisfaction attained from specific types of experiences, which in turn influence post-purchase behavioral intentions. Furthermore, to reinforce the revisit and recommendation of the site, a natural attraction should ensure the delivery of positive experiences to tourists according to their motivations, therefore, guaranteeing their satisfaction [26]. In this sense, the concept of loyalty has been recognized as one of the most important indicators of success in the marketing literature [27–30]. Similarly, if tourists have had better experiences at a destination, they are more likely to return to the same destination in the future [31,32].

The Albufera Natural Park and the Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park, known for their geological wealth, are located in Spain. Without a doubt, these natural parks are important ecotourism destinations in Europe. However, despite the importance of this topic, there is a limited body of research on the relationship of perceived value with loyalty in protected areas. In light of this research gap, the present study aims to: (i) establish the dimensions of perceived value in ecotourism and (ii) analyze the predictive relationships of the dimensions of perceived value with the loyalty of ecotourists. The findings may have theoretical implications and serve as usage guidelines for ecotourism sites, as demand studies are crucial for the elaboration of sustainable development projects.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Perceived Value in Tourism

This perceived value is used to examine variables that can produce changes in the future use of products, services, and purchasing decisions [22]. Perceived value is described as the act of evaluating consumer performance on a product or service based on perceptions of what is delivered and what is received [33]. In this sense, the perceived value offers producers guidance on the creation of products and services that help satisfy the needs and expectations of consumers, taking into account the perceived costs and benefits [34]. Furthermore, the perceived value is presented as a reliable term to anticipate the behaviors and conducts of tourists [34,35]. For this reason, the concept of perceived value is a predictor of behavioral intentions and is linked to consumer conduct [20,36].

Along these lines, perceived value is characterized by focusing on a utilitarian perspective, that is, to determine the cognitive balance between costs and benefits/quality, economic and cognitive evaluations are used [37]. Therefore, perceived value is based on a multidimensional construct, which includes values such as social and emotional, in addition to the hedonic and utilitarian dimensions that contribute to client satisfaction and affirmative emotions [38]. Their evaluation of the results include pre-purchase data, tourism resources, surrounding nature, quality of services, time, effort invested, and money [22]. In this way, the perceived value also provides a reasonable basis to induce the

visit of conscientious and responsible tourists who have similar ideas to each other [39]. Therefore, measuring perceived value can contribute to the tourism industry [40].

Several studies have been carried out in tourism that analyze the perceived value in its various typologies. For example, in Australia, Williams and Soutar [41] some dimensions of perceived value in their study (emotional value, functional value, value for money, novelty value, and social value). The academics established that the dimensions of perceived value found in their study intervene in tourist satisfaction. From another perspective, Lee et al. [38] identified the emotional and functional value in the behaviors of festival visitors. In their study, they showed that these two types of perceived value have a positive relationship with satisfaction.

### *2.2. The Perceived Value in Ecotourism*

The literature contains few findings from ecotourism studies that have studied its perceived value. In Malaysia, Jamal et al. [42], in their study carried out in a community determined five dimensions of perceived value. These were functional (price), functional (establishment), experiential (activity, culture, and knowledge), experimental (host-host communication), and emotional. In another similar ecotourism study located on Jeju Island in South Korea, Kim and Thapa [43] identified four perceived values: emotional, social, quality, and price. Academics indicated that these values influenced the flow experience and satisfaction.

Carvache-Franco et al. [44] determined four perceived values in a study in protected areas of Ecuador. The values were the following: social, economic, emotional, and functional. The authors also argued that the latter two were linked to satisfaction and loyalty. In addition, a current study by Carvache-Franco et al. [45] in protected areas of Costa Rica, established three dimensions of perceived value in ecotourism: emotional, social, and economic-functional. Likewise, the emotional dimension was the most relevant predictor in the intention to visit again, recommend and say positive things about the protected area.

### *2.3. Perceived Value Related to Satisfaction and Loyalty in Ecotourism*

Lee et al. [46] in their study in South Korea, divided the perceived value into functional, general, and emotional and tested the impacts on tourist satisfaction. The authors determined that these three values positively influenced tourist satisfaction.

Lee et al. [38] established that functional and emotional values are positively related to visitor satisfaction. Therefore, several studies have agreed that perceived value has a positive and significant effect on satisfaction with the experience [47,48].

About the effects of perceived value on satisfaction and loyalty, the authors Peña et al. [49] identified this relationship in a rural area in Spain that is also touristy. These results revealed that perceived value had a positive effect on tourists' satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, the information obtained about ecotourism will have as a consequence positive effects on ecotourism satisfaction as long as the ecotourism destination has a high perceived value and at the same time, there are positive attitudes towards ecotourism. In contrast, Kyung-Hee and Duk-Byeong [39] showed that the values that positively affected overall satisfaction were social, emotional, and functional values.

Another finding by Kim and Thapa [43] identified how tourists perceived value, price, and social and emotional quality. Loyalty to the destination and ecotourism behaviors were related to the experience of the flow. In fact, emotional and social values and perceived quality significantly affected satisfaction, experience, and flow. Furthermore, Carvache-Franco et al. [45] in a study in Ecuador, found that the dimension called "emotional value" was the most important predictor of loyalty to the ecotourism destination and that the economic-functional value dimension had significant power on overall satisfaction. In another more current study, for Li. [50], the perceived value of the tourist affected in a relevant and positive way the attitudinal and behavioral loyalty.

### 3. Methodology

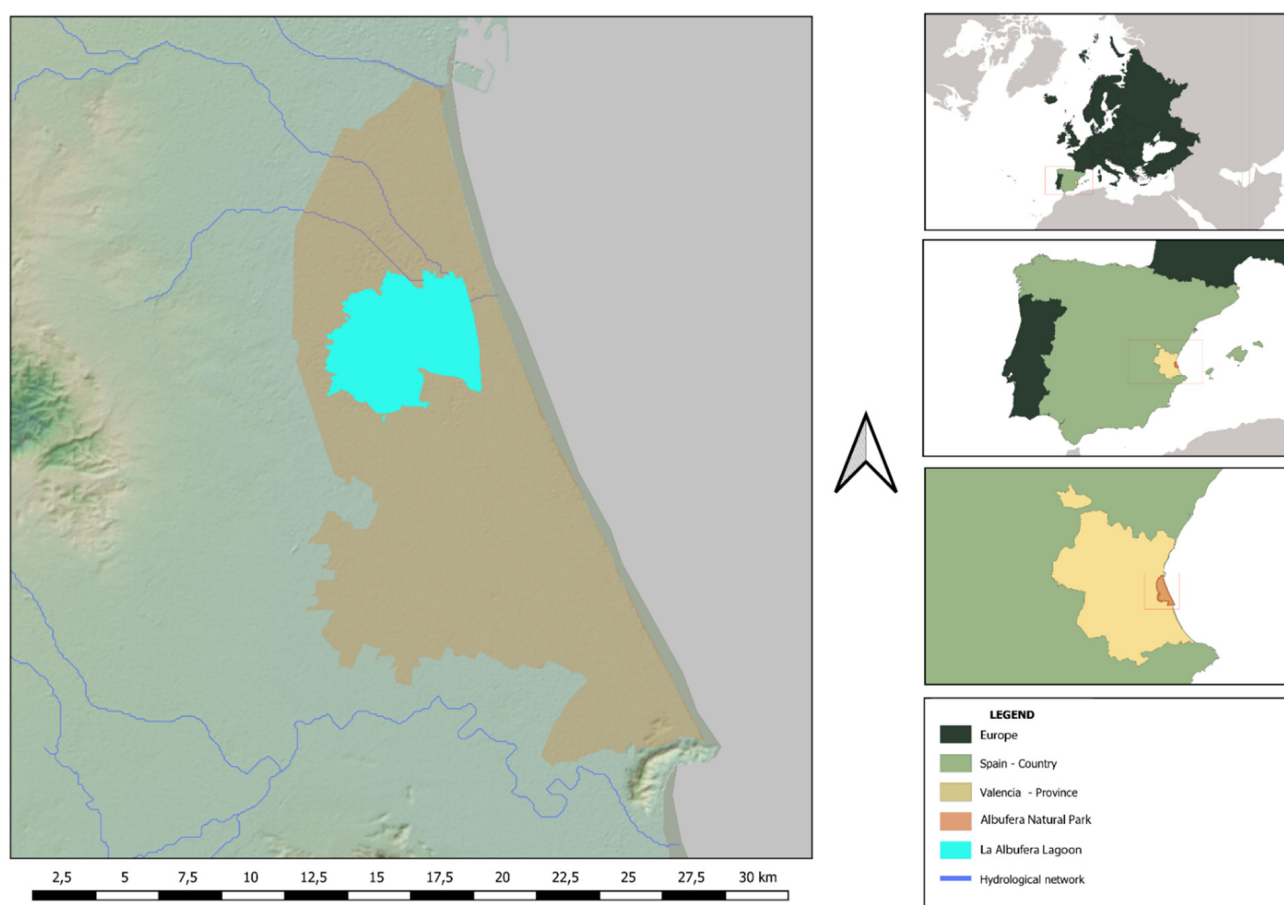
#### 3.1. Study Area

This study has been carried out in two important natural parks in Spain: the Albufera Natural Park and the Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park. The two protected areas chosen for the study are relevant because despite their geographical proximity, (approximately 200 km) they represent very different landscapes, which have in common the beauty of their natural environment, the richness and variety of their fauna and vegetation and for this reason they receive a large number of ecotourists. Both are recognized for their diversity and natural resources that they possess.

In 1986, the Albufera Natural Park was declared a natural park. It belongs to the list of the most important wetlands globally since 1990. In addition, since 1994 its area has been considered an IBA (important bird area). The National Park covers 21,120 hectares and is located just 10 km from the city of Valencia in Spain. See Figure 1. This wetland has a great biodiversity within its three main groups:

- The restinga or sand barrier that divides the lake from the sea.
- The Albufera lake, for its extraordinary economic, environmental and landscape value.
- The rice territory, which covers two thirds of the total park area.

Being a habitat of a great variety of flora and particular characteristics, the National Park becomes a place of rest and mating of birds. In addition, this park has become a source of income for those who live there, mainly through its three traditional uses, the cultivation of rice, hunting, and fishing when they are allowed. See Figure 2.

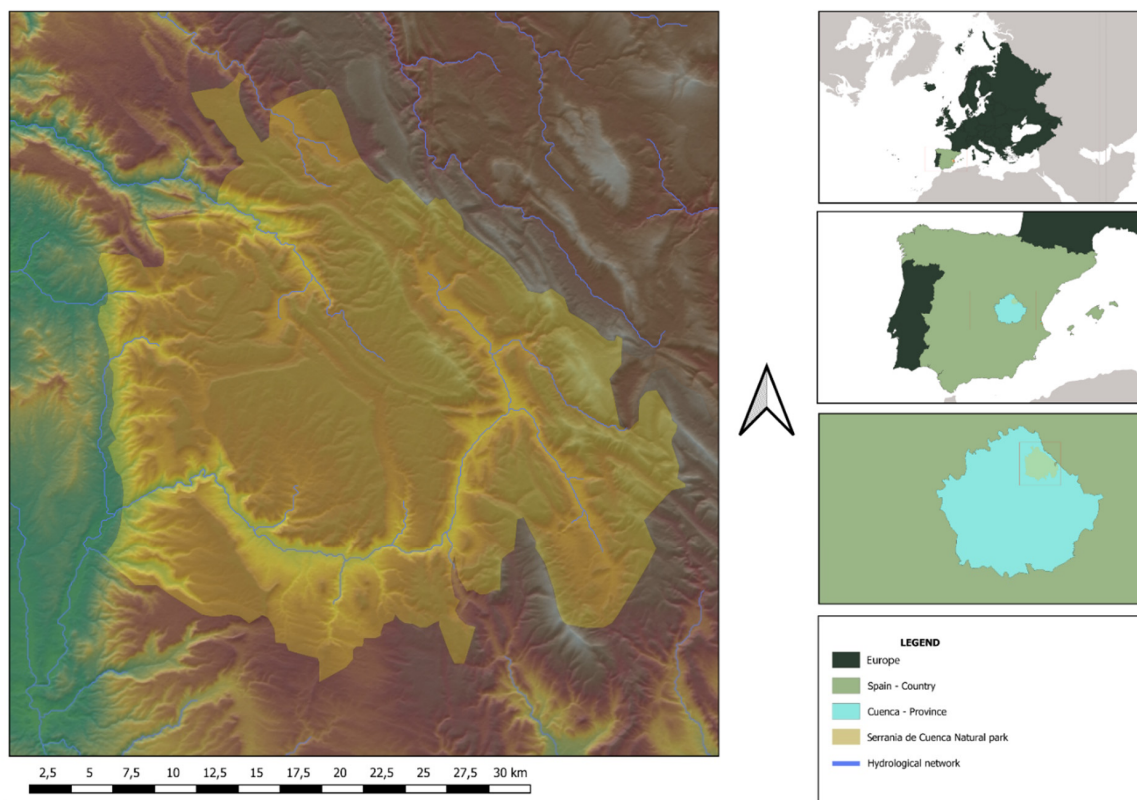


**Figure 1.** Geographic location of Albufera Natural Park. Source: National Center for Geographic Information (2020).

The Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park is located in the northwest of the province of Cuenca, in Spain. This protected area is part of the city of Cuenca and other municipalities, with a total area of 73,726 hectares. This destination is important for its particular geological diversity. See Figure 3. The most visited tourist places are the Enchanted City, the alleys of Las Majadas, and the Torcas de los Palancares, all of these renowned for their geological richness. Its relief is characterized by the existence of a very abundant karst modeling, highlighting sinkholes, caves, limestone, and chasms. See Figure 4.



**Figure 2.** Albufera Natural Park. Source: [www.valenciaturisme.org](http://www.valenciaturisme.org) (accessed on 15 October 2021).



**Figure 3.** Geographic location of Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park. Source: National Center for Geographic Information (2020).



**Figure 4.** Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park. Source: [www.turismocastillalamancha.es](http://www.turismocastillalamancha.es) (accessed on 15 October 2021).

### 3.2. Survey, Data Collection, and Analyses

For this research, a causal research method has been used, where the independent variables (motivational dimensions) had an effect on the dependent variables (satisfaction or loyalty). Finding the most important predictors that influenced the dependent variables. The questionnaire was designed, composed of three blocks: the first included the sociodemographic information of the respondents, the second measured the perceived value and the third analyzed the loyalty of tourists. The first block was created based on the study by Lee et al. [51]. The second part addressed the perceived value through 12 items that were measured on a five-point Likert scale, where one was a little and five was a lot. This section was based on the study by Kim and Park [39]. Cronbach's alpha index is the coefficient used to measure the reliability of a scale of measurement, reliability being the precision of the measurement of a scale. The use of this index in this study is useful to know the degree of measurement reliability, the higher the reliability, the greater the precision of the scale, and the lower the number of measurement errors. Cronbach's alpha index of the perceived value scale reached a total of 0.86, indicating a strong index for the perceived value scale of the present study. On the other hand, the last section included three questions measured on a five-point Likert scale, where one was a little and five was a lot, where the loyalty of tourists was analyzed and was adapted from Kim and Park [39].

The sample consisted of national and foreign tourists visiting the Albufera Natural Park and the Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park, both located in Spain. The surveys were applied during May and July 2019 to visitors over 18 years of age who were within the protected areas. The convenience sampling method was used. Researchers from the Polytechnic University of Valencia were the ones who obtained the sample. They were always predisposed to resolve the concerns of the respondents while independently answering the questionnaire.

For the present study, the infinite population formula was used and 349 valid questionnaires were collected; the variability of the population is estimated at 50% ( $p = q = 0.5$ ). With the sample obtained, the results are presented with a margin of error of  $\pm 5\%$  and a confidence level of 95%. The data obtained were analyzed using the IBM SPSS 22.0 program. The information obtained was examined in two stages to obtain the results.

In the first part, factor analysis was presented that allowed us to identify the constructs underlying the variables. For this, the Varimax rotation was used to simplify the reading of the data.

Also, the Kaiser criterion was used to find the number of factors, where only factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were used. The KMO index (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) and the Bartlett sphericity test were used to determine if factor analysis was appropriate. The KMO measure tests whether the partial correlations between the variables are small, while the Bartlett sphericity test tests whether the correlation matrix is an identity matrix, which would indicate that the factor model is inappropriate. To verify these factors, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), of maximum likelihood, was applied with the support of AMOS 21. In the last part, the multiple regression technique was used through the enter method, which served to choose the dimensions of the perceived value predicted by the variables of satisfaction and loyalty of tourists.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Research Sample Profile

Regarding the profile of the tourists surveyed in the natural parks of Spain, sociodemographic variables were analyzed that allow us to see their characteristics in a generalized way. Thus, the sample was made up of national tourists (10.3%) and foreign tourists (89.7%). The majority were women (53.3%), followed by men (46.7%). The results of age indicate that the majority group was 30 to 39 years (32.7%), followed by 20 to 29 years (23.5%). Regarding educational level, the largest group was university students (45.8%), and those with secondary education (32.7%). Finally, most of the tourists were private employees (31.5%) and public employees (22.3%).

### 4.2. Dimensions of Perceived Value

Through exploratory factor analysis, three dimensions of perceived value were extracted. The principal component analysis was used for factor extraction and allowed to form uncorrelated linear combinations of the observed variables. This analysis is useful to obtain the initial factorial solution. Varimax rotation method was used to reduce data and facilitate interpretation. Using the Kaiser criterion, three factors were obtained, which represented 64.79% of the total variance. The Cronbach's Alpha index of the factors reached values between 0.6 and 0.91. The KMO index (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) was 0.87 (close to 1), so the factor analysis model was adequate. In addition, it was determined that the application of factorial analysis was correct due to the fact that Bartlett's sphericity test was  $<0.05$ . See Table 1.

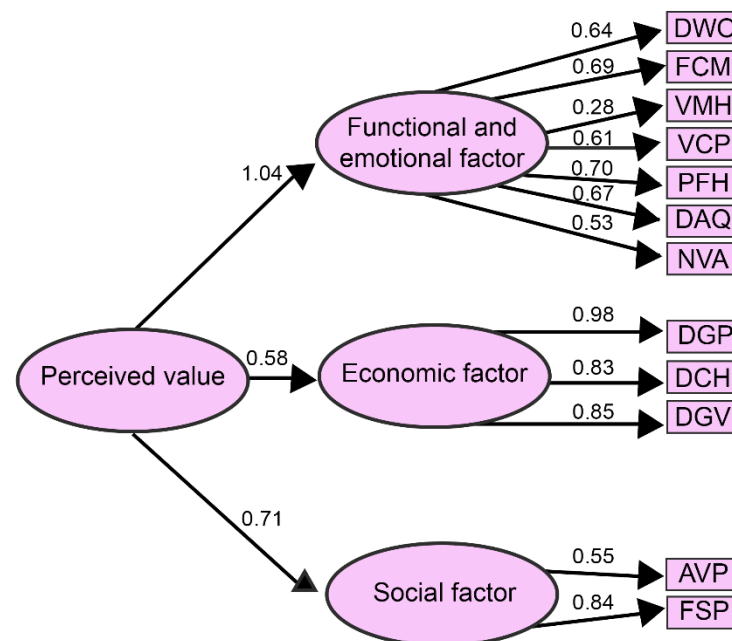
**Table 1.** Dimensions of perceived value.

Factors	Factor Loads	Half	Eigen Values	% Explained Variance	Cronbach's Alpha
Functional and emotional factors			5.26	43.82	0.72
The destination is well organized	0.763	4.09			
Fate is convenient for me	0.703	4.13			
This visit makes me feel happy	0.691	4.15			
This visit is pleasant	0.636	4.35			
People are friendly and make you feel at home	0.600	4.00			
The destination has an adequate level of quality	0.593	4.12			
The number of visitors the area receives is adequate	0.568	4.04			
Economic factor			1.49	12.45	0.91
The destination has good prices	0.907	3.75			
The destination is cheap (cheap)	0.892	3.76			
The destination has good value for money	0.84	3.94			
Social factor			1.02	8.52	0.60
This destination is visited by many people I know	0.881	2.51			
I feel like a special person	0.655	2.86			
% explained variance of all items				64.79	
Alpha of Cronbach of all items					0.86

As shown in Table 1, the first dimension was “functional and emotional”, and it is the factor with the highest explanatory power (43.82%) of the total variance, so it was the most important factor compared to the others. Likewise, this factor had the highest number of items in relation to the others. This first factor was linked to the variables of perceived value: the destination is well organized and convenient for me, this visit makes me feel happy, it is calm and pleasant, the people are friendly, the destination has an adequate level of quality, the number of visitors the destination welcomes is acceptable. The second factor was designated as “Economic” and reached a total of 12.45% of the variance. This factor was related to reasonable prices, good value for money, and the destination is cheap. To conclude, the third factor was designated “social” and comprised a total of 8.52% of the variance. This third dimension was linked to the visit of many people I know. Additionally, this visit makes me feel like a special person.

#### 4.3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

While the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) allowed us to know what the factors were, the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) allowed us to contrast these factors and know their degree of validity, which allowed us to confirm the validity of the model. We also conducted a CFA using maximum likelihood to assure the measurement model’s reliability, which established the relationships between the fundamental constructs and the observed variables (See Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** Measurement model: DWO-the destination is well organized, FCM-fate is convenient for me, VMH-this visit makes me feel happy, VCP-this visit is pleasant, PFH-people are friendly and make you feel at home, DAQ-the destination has an adequate level of quality, NVA-the number of visitors the area receives is adequate, DGP-the destination has good prices, DCH-the destination is cheap, DGV-the destination has good value for money, AVP-this destination is visited by many people, FSP-I know I feel like a special person.

Regarding the adjustment indices, we have the Chi-square ratio on the degrees of freedom (CMIN/DF) = 3.590, the degree of freedom  $df = 53$ , and the  $p$ -value 0.000, the index being significant, so we will analyze other evidence due to the large sample size [52–55]. We analyze the CFI (comparative fit index), one of the most used indices for its performance. If the index reached a minimum value of 0.9, there would be an adequate degree of adjustment; for this case, it was 0.923, which indicates an adequate degree of adjustment. Additionally, the NFI index (normed fit index) was used, which performs an assessment



of the decrease in the  $\chi^2$  statistic of the adopted model with respect to the base model. For an adequate degree of adjustment, a value close to 0.90 should be achieved. For this case, it was 0.90, indicating an acceptable degree of fit. On the other hand, the RMSEA (mean square error of approximation) values, which translates into the amount of variance not explained by the model by the degree of freedom, were less than 0.05 indicating an adequate degree of fit, and the values between 0.05 and 0.08 are a reasonable degree of fit. In this study, it was 0.08, indicating an adequate fit of the model. Therefore, the statistical values of the measurement model met the recommended criteria [54,56–58]. Therefore, it was concluded that the model conformed to the construct validity and it was according to several studies [59–61].

#### 4.4. Perceived Value and Overall Satisfaction

To carry out the multiple regression, the enter method was used. In this way, the dimensions of perceived value that predict general satisfaction in these protected parks were studied. The results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Relationship of perceived value and satisfaction.

Variable	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance
Functional and emotional factor	0.526	12.427	0.000	1.000
Economic factor	0.285	6.743	0.000	1.000
Social factor	0.191	4.510	0.000	1.000
(Constant)		158.070	0.000	
F	73.369			
Sig.	0.000			
Durbin-Watson	1.996			

The results in Table 2 show a significant F test ( $p < 0.05$ ), which indicated a link between the response variable (Satisfaction) and the significant predictors (perceived value). The tolerance values did not indicate multicollinearity with the independent variables (tolerance close to or equal to 1). Furthermore, the value of the Durbin-Watson statistic reached 1.99, being within the interval between 1.5 and 2.5. According to the results, the most significant predictor in the general satisfaction of tourists in these protected parks was the “functional and emotional” dimension (Beta = 0.526,  $p < 0.01$ ). The second most significant element was the “economic” factor (Beta = 0.285,  $p < 0.01$ ). This means that tourists expect to receive well-organized and emotional services in order to feel satisfied with their visit.

#### 4.5. Perceived Value and Intentions to Return to Protected Areas

To carry out the multiple regression, the enter method was used. In this way, the perceived value factors that have predicted the intentions to return to these parks were studied. The results are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Relationship of perceived value and intentions to return.

Variable	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance
Functional and emotional factor	0.346	7.471	0.000	1.000
Economic factor	0.236	5.097	0.000	1.000
Social factor	0.311	6.707	0.000	1.000
(Constant)		79.514	0.000	
F	42.261			
Sig.	0.000			
Durbin-Watson	1.608			

The results of Table 3 show a significant F test ( $p < 0.05$ ), which indicated a link between the return intentions and the significant predictors. The tolerance values were 1, which

indicates that there was no multicollinearity with the independent variables. Furthermore, the Durbin-Watson statistic reached a value of 1.61, so it could be assumed that there was no autocorrelation in the errors. On the other hand, the most significant predictor of tourists' intentions to revisit these sites was the "functional and emotional" dimension (Beta = 0.346,  $p < 0.01$ ). The second most significant element was the "social" dimension (Beta = 0.311,  $p < 0.01$ ). This means that visitors expect an exciting and well-organized experience at the destination. In this way, the return of tourists to the destination would increase.

#### 4.6. The Perceived Value and Intentions of Recommending a Protected Area

The multiple regression method was used to study the factors of the perceived value predicted by the intentions to recommend the parks. The results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Relationship of perceived value and intentions to recommend.

Variable	Beta	<i>t</i>	Sig.	Tolerance
Functional and emotional factor	0.504	11.488	0.000	1.000
Economic factor	0.257	5.869	0.000	1.000
Social factor	0.169	3.855	0.000	1.000
(Constant)		131.159	0.000	
F	60.427			
Sig.	0.000			
Durbin-Watson	1.733			

The results in Table 4 show a significant F test ( $p < 0.05$ ), which indicates a link between the significant predictors and the response variable (intention to recommend). Furthermore, among the tolerance values, no multicollinearity was found with the independent variables. There was also no autocorrelation in the errors according to the Durbin-Watson statistic. The results showed that the most significant predictor of tourists' intentions to recommend these protected areas was the "functional and emotional" dimension (Beta = 0.504,  $p < 0.01$ ). The second most significant element was the "economic" (Beta = 0.257,  $p < 0.01$ ). However, it was not as important a predictor as the "functional and emotional" factor. This means that tourists prefer to find organization and emotions in the visit. In this way, they would recommend the destination to others.

#### 4.7. Perceived Value and Saying Positive Things about Destination

Multiple regression was used to study factors of the perceived value predicted by intentions to say positive things about these destinations. The results are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Relationship of perceived value and saying positive things about the destination.

Variable	Beta	<i>t</i>	Sig.	Tolerance
Functional and emotional factor	0.588	14.059	0.000	1.000
Economic factor	0.223	5.332	0.000	1.000
Social factor	0.108	2.580	0.010	1.000
(Constant)		164.250	0.000	
F	77.583			
Sig.				
Durbin-Watson	1.784			

The results of Table 5 show a significant F test ( $p < 0.05$ ); the tolerance values did not show multicollinearity with the independent variables. Furthermore, there was no autocorrelation in the errors, according to the Durbin-Watson statistic. According to the results, the most significant predictor of tourists' intentions to say positive things about these protected areas was the "functional and emotional" dimension (Beta = 0.588,  $p < 0.01$ ). The second most significant element was the "economic" (Beta = 0.223,  $p < 0.01$ ). However,

it was not as important a predictor as the “functional and emotional” factor. It would seem that tourists prefer destinations where they find interesting and well-organized services. In this way, they would speak positive things about fate to others.

## 5. Discussion

The present study aimed to determine the factors of perceived value and the predictive relationship of these dimensions with the satisfaction and loyalty of ecotourists. As a result, three factors of perceived value in ecotourism have been identified: economic value, social value, and functional and emotional value. If we compare these results with other previous findings, we have the results of Lee et al. [46], who found functional and emotional value (similar to our functional and emotional value). In another study, Williams and Soutar [41] identified five dimensions of perceived value: functional and emotional value, similar to our functional and emotional value, value for money (similar to our economic value), social value, and novelty value (analogous to our social value). On the other hand, Bajs [34] found: functional value and affective value (similar to our “functional and emotional value”), social value (similar to our “social value”). Instead, Kim and Thapa [43] identified the perceived values: quality and emotional (similar to our “functional and emotional value”), price (similar to our economic value), and social (very similar to our “social value”). In other studies, Carvache Franco et al. [44] and Kyung-Hee and Duk-Byeong [39] identified four perceived values: functional, economic, emotional, and social. In our study, the same values were found (functional and emotional, economic, social) with the difference that “functional and emotional values” were found together. This is one of the contributions to the academic literature that the present study makes. This means that tourists expect to receive a quality service, well organized, but with emotions.

Regarding the power and dominance of the main dimensions of perceived value in tourist satisfaction, Lee et al. [46] found that emotional value, functional value, and general value positively influence visitor satisfaction. Similar to the “functional and emotional” value we find. For Carvache-Franco et al. [45], the economic-functional value dimension greatly influenced overall satisfaction, very similar to our results. However, the present study contributes to the literature mentioning that the main perceived value that predicts general satisfaction is the “functional and emotional value”. Therefore, tourists will be more satisfied if the products and services are efficient and organized, possibly related to trained personnel and adequate infrastructure. Additionally, that provides exciting experiences to tourists.

With respect to loyalty, some investigations have found that perceived value has value and dominance in the intentions to return to a destination [19,49,52,53]. For Carvache-Franco et al. [45], the dimension “emotional value” was the most significant predictor of ecotourism destination loyalty. As we show, there is not enough scientific literature that mentions the factor of perceived value that is most predicted by the intentions to revisit, recommend and say positive things about a protected area. The findings of this research showed that the most significant predictor of the intentions, recommendations, and positive comments of returning tourists about the destination was the “functional and emotional” dimension, thus contributing to the literature. Therefore, the supply of services and planning must be organized with appropriate infrastructure and qualified personnel. Additionally, they deliver emotions to tourists. In this way.

With regard to the practical implications, the perceived value cooperates with companies immersed in the tourism industry and is related to knowing the value that tourists place on services. In this sense, well-planned and designed services that are organized in terms of personnel, infrastructure, and materials must be offered in places where the tourist can feel in a welcoming and exciting environment, with the best furniture and infrastructure, in addition to being assisted by qualified personnel offering quality service. Thus, the satisfaction and loyalty of tourists to these sites can be increased, which translates into profits for the destination and its inhabitants, in addition to contributing to the sustainability and conservation of these protected areas. Additionally, perceived value

helps determine both rates and quality of services. That is why measuring the economic value that tourists perceive for services is extremely important. Thus, services should be offered at reduced rates and have a good relationship with the quality they offer. The social and emotional environment is also important, so services should be provided within these areas by organizing events and meetings so that visitors can meet, exchange opinions and experiences, providing them with an exciting experience. On the other hand, this study serves for the planning of public policies aimed at increasing the satisfaction and loyalty of tourists, taking into account the sustainability and environmental conservation in these protected areas.

## 6. Conclusions

Ecotourism allows the visitor to carry out activities in nature in a conscious way. Protected areas are the favorite destinations for ecotourism. Therefore, it is essential to carry out research of perceived value in these destinations to contribute to the planning of sustainable programs and the development of public policies within these Ecotourism destinations.

In addition, conducting studies on the perceived value of ecotourism is essential to provide more information for the literature on this topic. Thus, three factors of perceived value in ecotourism destinations were identified, namely, economic, social, functional, and emotional. The most critical dimension is “functional and emotional value”. Therefore, it would be important that interesting and well-organized services are offered in these protected areas. On the other hand, the “functional and emotional” dimension is the most important predictor of satisfaction, recommendation, and saying positive things about the destination. Therefore, it would be the most important perceived value for planning ecotourism services.

Among the theoretical implications, the literature is provided in such a way that three perceived values can be found in ecotourism similar to those of various authors [34–36,39,42]. First, find functional and emotional value together in a single perceived value. This means that the emotions of the tourists are linked to the organization of the services. Likewise, the “functional and emotional” value is the factor that most predicts satisfaction, similar results [36,37]. Another input of the present investigation, due to the scarce scientific literature, is that the “functional and emotional value” is the principal predictor of return, recommendation and saying positive things about the destination.

To conclude, the main limitation of the present investigation was the sample collection time, so the demand may be different in other stages. Additionally, a new line of research is opened related to the perceived value and image of ecotourism destinations for the COVID-2019 post-pandemic visit.

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