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Tourist Guides in Lombok: Responsibilities, Future Career, Education, Need Assessment, and Recommendations for Future Research

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Abstract

Research on tourism suggests that tourist guides are key representatives in the tourism industry as they contribute significantly to the satisfaction of visitors and affect whether or not the tourist will revisit destinations. The present article reviews the existing literature on tourist guides from diverse perspectives in the hope that it would shed light on this career brighter. It begins with the definition of tourist guides, their key roles in the tourism industry, future of tourist guides, education and training and their needs for further learning. This paper also provide a recommendation on the materials to include for a tour guide training, particularly in Lombok.

Keywords: *Lombok, Need Assessment, Tour Guides*

1. Introduction

Research on tourism suggests that tourist guides are key representatives in the tourism industry as they contribute significantly to the satisfaction of visitors and are believed to determine whether or not the tourist will revisit destinations. Preparing tourist guides would give a vital contribution to the sustainability of the hospitality industry, especially for Lombok tourism. Not only does it affect the promotion of tourist attractions, but the tour guides also have the potential to create an overall impression of tour packaged offered and image of tourist destinations. For this reason, equipping tourist guides with the necessary knowledge and skills to enhance the quality service is worth taking into account. One of the crucial elements of tourist guide training is concerned with language skills development. In order to ascertain the effectiveness of language training for the tourist guides, it is necessary to conduct a need assessment. The result of the need assessment would allow the identification the learners' need for learning and determine what specific language skills which need further enhancement.

The current paper is a review of existing literature on the profession of tour guides which covers the broad terms of tour guides definition, their roles, issues facing them, their future

careers and education. This paper also discusses possible method to educating Lombok Tour guides which is initiated by a need assessment at the outsets.

2. Discussion

Tour guide as defined by World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (2010) is 'a person who guides visitors in the language of their choice and interprets the cultural and natural heritage of an area which person normally possesses an area-specific qualification usually issued and/or recognized by the appropriate authority'. This definition suggests that a tour guide can be anyone who is equipped with both language competences and comprehensive information about culture and nature related to the visited destination. Based on the study of Melia in Dublin (2017) she identified criteria which a tour guide has to possess. The author suggests that a tour guide is someone who likes working as a freelance; enjoys working fewer hours in the winter; does not mind working early mornings and late nights; is not overly concerned with the status, or lack thereof, of guiding, is not overly concerned with whether guiding has a career path; and is optimistic about the future of the tourist guiding industry. This implies that there is a number of requirements vital for a tour guide to be professional in the hospitality industry.

Significance Roles of Tour Guides

In the tourism industry, tourist guides play very vital roles. They serve as the key players to ascertain tourists' satisfaction and intention to revisit destinations. As noted by Çetinkaya and Öter (2016) tourist guides act as "*key representatives of destinations who play a significant role in tourist satisfaction and revisit intention.* Their survey on 530 tourists revealed that there is a significant relationship between tourist satisfaction, re-visiting intention and tour guiding service. Tsegaw and Teressa (2017) add that tour guides are able to transform the tourists' visit into a life-changing experience and insightful. Furthermore, Lin, Mei, and Yi (2017) point out that competent tour guides could have significant impacts on service quality and tourists' satisfaction. These studies indicate that quality service coming from competent tour guides influence tourism sustainability.

Future of Tourist Guides

Two studies by Melia in Dublin, Ireland are worth taking into account to see the future of tour guides profession. Melia's earlier study (2012) revealed that the vast majority of *tourist guides and tour operators are optimistic about the future of the tourist guiding industry the career is seasonal and part-time.* This implies that tour guides are best-done part-time rather than full time as earning might not be sufficient for a living. For this reason, Melia (2017) reminds that being full-time in the tourism industry would be difficult for tour guides unless they have additional *income form either inside or outside of the industry.* Another study (Aloudat, 2017) on Jordanian students majoring in tour guide regarding the perception of tour guiding profession. This study revealed that tour guiding is regarded 'as a potentially interesting career enabling them to be self–reliant and offering them the opportunity to gain new knowledge and meet foreign and famous people. The students in this study also reported that stable income is not guaranteed in tour guiding although the could earn tipping and commissions. Another finding of this study suggests that being a tour guide in Jordan is highly respected by their families and the wider community. Will this be the case from the context of the tour guide in Lombok?. Further study on students' and community perception of this career is worth investigating.

Issues Facing Tourists Guides

Another recent study in Sri Langka (Sandaruwani and Gnanapala, 2016) investigated the issues facing tourist guides in the country. The findings of this study revealed that tourists guide encountered multiple problems including unfair competition from unlicensed tourist guides, being less respected and recognized by wider community and trade. They also suffered from earning low remuneration, lack of job security, poor and unfriendly working conditions while performing their duties and responsibilities. This study also found that many tour guides were not equipped with the necessary education and training resulting in low performance. Furthermore, tourist guides did not have sufficient knowledge about tourism products, services, and access routes. Another important issue found in this study is that the tour guides' education was relatively low. With such a limited educational background, further problems could occur. It could affect their performance and behavior. For instance, they could force tourists to buy things or attend events at their own expense or charge and demanded tips while being unable to demonstrate proper service attitude. Such behavior would impact tourism sustainability. Sandaruwani et al (2016) also highlight that the tour guides did not have the necessary foreign language skills to communicate effectively with the tourists. These issues could also occur in Lombok. To prevent the potential pitfalls caused by the tour guides' proficiency and attitude, a scholarly investigation on this matter needs to be done. We can resort to the findings of this study to better prepare local tour guides in Lombok for the sake of the sustainability of Lombok tourism development.

Tour Guides Education

The latest study Bali (Ratminingsih, Suardana, and Martin, 2018) revealed that the vast majority (73,2%) of 30 tour guides in Ambengan village only received primary education and only very few of them (2%) with an educational background in tourism. Such evidence indicates such a low level of tour guides education and this is in contrast with their demanding roles. As aforementioned, tourist guides are key front-line employees to make the very best image of tourism destination and to attract the tourist to re-visit. They are also very much in charge of "*the overall impression and satisfaction with the tour services offered by a destination"* (Tsegaw and Teressa (2017). *It is further argued that t*hey are key representatives of tourist attractions and have to be able to show the best part of exciting sites. Due to their vital roles, tourists guide have to be prepared with necessary skills, through proper education, which enables them to do their expected roles (Lovrentjev, 2015). With proper education, tour guides could enhance their language skills, enrich their tourism-related knowledge and improve their services attitude. For this reason, a study on what sort of education appropriate for the tourist guides, in Lombok especially is necessary. This study should accommodate the tourist guides' points of views, visitors and tourists guide association perspectives as well as the community voices.

Suggested Training for Lombok Tour Guides

For the context of Lombok Tourism, the providing necessary training for tour guides are urgent as Lombok has been one of the international tourist destination due to the presence of Mandalika Motor GP Circuit. Despite this, to assure the training provide is effective hence it is necessary to conduct a study on what should be included in the training, the methods and who should take part in it. For the starting point, it is necessary to conduct a need assessment to help identify the training learning outcomes and other related aspects. Based on the results of the Need Assessment, we are able to plan a better training for the tour guides. Further discussion

on need assessment and strategies to run the training are presented in the following paragraphs.

Needs Assessment

One of the necessary skills which tour guides should possess is being fluent in conversing with foreign languages especially English. As aforementioned, the study by Sandaruwani and Gnanapala (2016) indicates that tourist guides lack the language skills necessary to help them communicate effectively with tourists. Limited speaking skills, for instance, could affect their performance and influence tourists' overall impression of the tour packaged offered. To enhance tourist attraction promotion, it is of vital importance that tourist guides' speaking skills to enhance. This can be done through intensive English language training which specifically addresses their needs of communication. To ascertain the tour guides' needs, a course designer should carry out a need assessment to help them identify what the tour guides need to learn, how they want to learn them and what topics would be most preferable for them. 'Learners were seen to have different needs and interests, which had an important influence on their motivation to learn and therefore on the effectiveness of their learning' (Douglas, 2013).

Need assessment is of great importance for English for specific purposes (ESP) teachers to recognize learners' needs of language learning and determine which language skills need further development (Nunan, 1988). It is further argued that ESP teachers' success in the teaching and learning process is greatly dependent on need assessment (Cowling, 2007; Taillefer, 2007). Put it in other words, ESP teachers must conduct a formal needs assessment to identify the tourist guides learning needs to ascertain the effectiveness of language training programs.

Existing models of Tour Guides Training

As tour guides benefit significantly companies and tourism industry in general, hence a tour guide should be knowledgeable. They should have sufficient understanding about issues such as "flora, fauna, geographic location, climate, habitats, ecosystems, government structure, populations, traditions, customs, folklore, languages, architectural styles, historical events etc., particularly about sites to which they direct visitors and which they interpret to them" (Wei, 2007). The local authority of West Lombok has set a standardized training for tour guide in the form of module. In the module, the training materials for tour guides in Lombok should cover: 1) general knowledge on tourism, 2) guiding techniques, 3) tour guide performance, etc (West Lombok Tourism Office, 2012).

Our recommendation to Training Tour Guides in Lombok

Being a tour guide is not a simple but complex work. For this reason providing suitable training for them is of vital importance. Here is a list of recommendation to organize a tour guide training in Lombok. To begin with, the training can be run by either company, private training institution of by Tourism office or collaboration of the tree. The training should aim not only fostering the language skills, but also tourism related skills. For this reason we should structure the training as illustrated in the following table.

No	Training Components	Description
1	Foreign Language Training	Each tour guide should be able to talk fluently at least with two foreign languages
2	Local Language Training	As Lombok has many different dialects, hence it is necessary for them to be well informed about the

		local languages
3	Cross cultural understanding	Having sufficient understanding about cultural differences would allow them to adjust better
4	ICT literacy such as digital marketing, website design and content management.	They need these skills to promote themselves and maintain good network with visitors. This will also enable them to be more independent tour guides
5	Local culture and values	Having deep understanding on local culture and values would keep them safe from damaging the local genuine. Many tour guides received negative feedback from Lombok community as they do not respect the local culture. This was caused by their lack of understanding and commitment on promoting the local on the local values.
6	Tourism related training such as planning itinerary, handling complain, making reservation, cooking, first aid etc.	These skill would allow them to make the tour more enjoyable and satisfying

3. Conclusion

In this paper, we have discussed the profession of tour guides by resorting to several scholarly findings worldwide. From the literature, it evidenced that tour guides must have many critical skills, knowledge, and attitude to gain benefits in the tourism industry. Not only does it plays as key players in promoting tourist attractions, but tour guides performance can also impact the impression on tourist destinations and the image of tour packaged offered. For this reason, we argue that tour guides must be prepared with the necessary skills, knowledge and other related aspects to enhance their performance in the hospitality industry. One of the aspects which should be the focus of our attention is on the tour guide language skills as well as their understanding of cultural diversity. Finally in this paper we have recommended a list of materials to cover in the tour guide training.

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