

Tour Guiding Quality Assurance Mechanisms and Respective Tourist Satisfaction: Evidence from South Ethiopia

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Abstract

Though guides are one of the key front-line players in the tourism industry, conceptual confusion has long been a source of difficulty in the study and it is essentially contested concept and scholars made a notable effort to address this problem. Through their knowledge and interpretation, they have the ability to transform the tourists' visit into an experience and knowledge level. This paper was intended to uncover tour guiding quality assurance mechanisms, its challenges and respective tourist satisfactions with special reference to southern regions of Ethiopia. The findings were disclosed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency, mean, standard deviation, and t-test where appropriate. Further, focus group discussion, key informant interview, and observation were used. The findings of the study have portrayed that the practice of licensing, certification, awards of excellence and accreditation is poor and practically full of inconsistency. The descriptive analysis suggests that lack of adequate practical training and education, involvement of nonprofessionals, and absence of strong monitoring practice are found to be basic problems for the guides. Moreover, seasonality, money oriented practice, and involvement of non-professionals are the chronic challenges. Concurrent with it, evaluation of tourist satisfaction by the guides' service found to be very poor. Moreover, the study also portrays that networking, travel needs, autonomy, job quality, personal satisfaction, and future growth anticipation of the sector are the top motivational factors to join the profession as a local guide. It is also found that customer care, interpretive approach to communication, interpretation and storytelling are found as the top skill gaps of the tour guides. The main conclusions were that guides need to be well trained; certified and other regulatory and monitoring mechanism has to be adopted regularly.

Keywords: Tour guide; Skill gap; Tourist satisfaction; Quality assurance; Certification; Challenge; Motivations; Licensing; Accreditation

Introduction

The tour guiding profession has been the "Cinderella" of the tourism industry: attractive, useful, but often neglected. Being a tour guide has been an "attractive" dream job for many people [1]. Recently the development of standards and certification programs in the tourism industry gained importance in tourist-guide nexus. In many countries, tourist guiding is a regulated profession requiring a license, which is most often acquired through some form of education or training and examination or testing. However, Despite being one of the oldest human activities, tourist guiding is currently "hidden", depreciated and undervalued profession, which is why Pond [1] names its members as "orphans" of the industry. Hence, leading experts from different disciplines and diverse geographic regions discuss regarding this fundamental, often controversial topics. The debates include subjects such as certification, accreditation, and regulatory mechanisms of tour guides from the perspectives of tourist satisfaction and sustainability.

In tourism sector where tourists from different parts of the globe involve, professional and ethical guides could play a significant role in representing and communicating the image of a country in general and a destination in particular. They play a vivacious role in bringing satisfaction to tourists visiting a country or region. According to several developed theories, the guide's protagonist comprises different sub roles and spheres, as for example the role as a leader, an interpreter, a mediator, a social catalyst, a navigator and a representative [2-5]. Moreover, within the process of globalization, the job of a tour guide gains particular importance, as a bridge actor between different cultures [6].

Cognizant to this, the tourism literature has widely recognized that the service quality of the tour guide is a critical factor in achieving

tourist satisfaction [7-11], influencing travel operator's reputation and word-of-mouth publicity (Heung), and affecting the image and revisit intention of a destination. In addition, tour guides have the ability to transform a visitor's sightseeing activities into a truly memorable learning experience [9] and have the opportunity to heighten environmental awareness and understanding in their guests. Nowadays, the profession has advanced from simply showing a visitor unfamiliar sights for the "wow" factor to the incorporation of interpretation, movement towards sustainable practices and industry certification. As a result, destination governments and tourism industries are increasingly aware of the need to improve the service quality of the tour guiding profession; for instance by investing in training programs [12,13] as well as quality assurance and regulatory mechanisms [9,11].

Ethiopia has been experiencing a rapid expansion of the inbound tourism market over the past decade. Statistical reports indicate that Ethiopia has witnessed an unprecedented growth in tourism development in recent years and the numbers of tourist arrivals are also increasing from time to time. The tourism industry has been experiencing a boom time; hence, in order to keep up with the increasing demand towards tour, it is in desperate need of qualified tourism professionals. Observations and a modicum of research suggest

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that the rapid rise in need for travel in tourism industry over the past few years has increased the demand for intermediaries (tour guides) to link up travelers with experience. Those intermediaries need to possess a good blend of enthusiasm, knowledge, personal qualities and high standards of conduct and ethics and required to provide interpretation and commentary in an inspiring and entertaining manner, in the language of the visitor's choice. Chowdhary and Prakash [14] ascertain that tour guiding and interpretation is a basic activity in tourism value chain. In this connection, Geva and Goldman [7] stress that the responsibility to make customers be satisfied mostly relies on the tour guide because they are involved with tour participants in a continuous and intense contact throughout the whole tour.

It is further argued that tour guides are front-line employees who are very much responsible for the overall impression and satisfaction with the tour services offered by a destination. Cognizant with it, Modlin et al. [15] described tour guides as an indispensable crossing point between tourists and destinations. For that reason, they are also known to have the powers to make a trip enjoyable or boring, to build or distort image and reputation of a destination. Zhang and Chow [10] pointed out that the success of the tourism industry most of the times relies on the performance of tour guides. Consequently, they are supposed to be registered, certified and given licenses of performance to be distinguished from self-appointed and dubious guides, and at the same time to ensure minimum standards of professionalism. In line with it, Weiler and Ham [12] affirm that tour guides as employees [unofficial ambassadors] are expected to offer service that is high in quality to boost not only satisfaction of visitors but also profits margins. However, Southern Ethiopia being an emerging destination with a shortage of licensed guides but with a growing demand for guided tours, it becomes too difficult to keep pace with the rapidly changing and complex requirements of tourists in a highly competitive national tourism market. Even, guides become the most maligned people in their service.

In spite of the many hardships they endure, some tour guides become so successful in providing professional services and make tourists satisfied. Others wither away from the principles of the profession and give distorted information to tourists. Given such a divergent outcome, it is appealing to investigate why this is so. Empirical evidence regarding the tour guide and the tour guiding service in Southern Ethiopia is almost non-existent, and the quality assurance system, motivational factors to join the guiding profession and the respective tourist satisfaction remain overlooked and undetected. Therefore, in this study, focus is made on the quality assurance system (licensing, certification and accreditation), motivation, challenges that tour guides face in their day to day operations, and tourist satisfactions by the tour guides service because no extant work directly questions the nature of these problems. Thus, this study aims to fill this gap through a systematic, exclusive, and in-depth study.

The study is designed to address the following specific objectives. These are:

1. To evaluate the local tour guide quality assurance mechanisms of South Ethiopia against tour guide quality assurance practices.
2. To assess the Challenges for the regulation of tour guiding services in South Ethiopia.
3. To identify the Challenges that tour guides face in their day to day operation.
4. To identify the levels of tourist satisfaction by the tour guides

service in South Ethiopia.

5. To identify the motivational factors that motivate the tour guides to join the profession.
6. To identify the skill gaps of the tour guides of South Ethiopia.

Research Methodology

Description of the study area

The SNNPR is located in the south western part of Ethiopia and shares boundaries with Kenya to the south and Sudan to the west and southwest. The area covers 110, 931.9 square kilometers, which is 10% of the area of the country [16]. The population of the area is estimated at 15 million with a density of 136 persons per square meter, and is growing at 2.9% per annum [17]. The rural population constitutes close to 90% of the total population in the region. The region has 13 zones, subdivided into 126 woredas (districts), which are further divided into 3,714 rural and 238 urban sub-woredas (Figure 1).

Research design and approach

In order to gain the advantages of both and to offset the discrepancies of each, a mixed research approach was employed. Combining quantitative and qualitative methods sounds like a good idea and using multiple approaches can capitalize on the strengths of each approach and offset their different weaknesses [18]. According to Kothari [19] for descriptive research, survey design is appropriate. As a result, this study has employed survey study design. Both primary and secondary sources were used and observation check list, key informant interview, and questionnaire, were the major primary sources. In order to build the project constructively and to make the reader comprehend its outcomes, both primary and secondary data were used in the study.

The target populations from which the sample sizes were drawn are tourists, local tour guides and tourism experts from culture and tourism office. The researcher employed purposive, accidental and comprehensive (available) sampling techniques. A purposive sampling technique was used for the identification of respondents to the qualitative interview. Having this in mind, for the purpose of this study all tourism experts working in culture and tourism department of Hawassa, Arba Minch, konso, Jinka and Dilla, were included. However, sample size of the local tour guides and tourists were determined on the basis of comprehensive (58 local guides) and accidental sampling (85 tourists) respectively. The five metropolitan and touristic sites of the region were selected on the basis of purposive sampling and five tourist guides associations were the focus of the study. Hence, in these associations there were a total of 58 local guides. As a result, a comprehensive sampling method was used for the study.

The collected data has been systematically verified, described, analyzed and interpreted using both quantitative and qualitative (to provide rich, in-depth knowledge from multiple viewpoints) approaches. Data gathered using predominantly qualitative variables was subject to phenomena description and narrations. Since data from the interviewees and direct observation are largely qualitative, the interpretation involved triangulation of different views from varied sources and the case study, and theory-based approaches were used for triangulation to increase the trustworthiness of findings. The data from questionnaires were analyzed through mean, frequency, and percentages basing the study objectives, using Likert's scales of 5-points. The data from questionnaires were facilitated and analyzed with the help of version 16.0 Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)

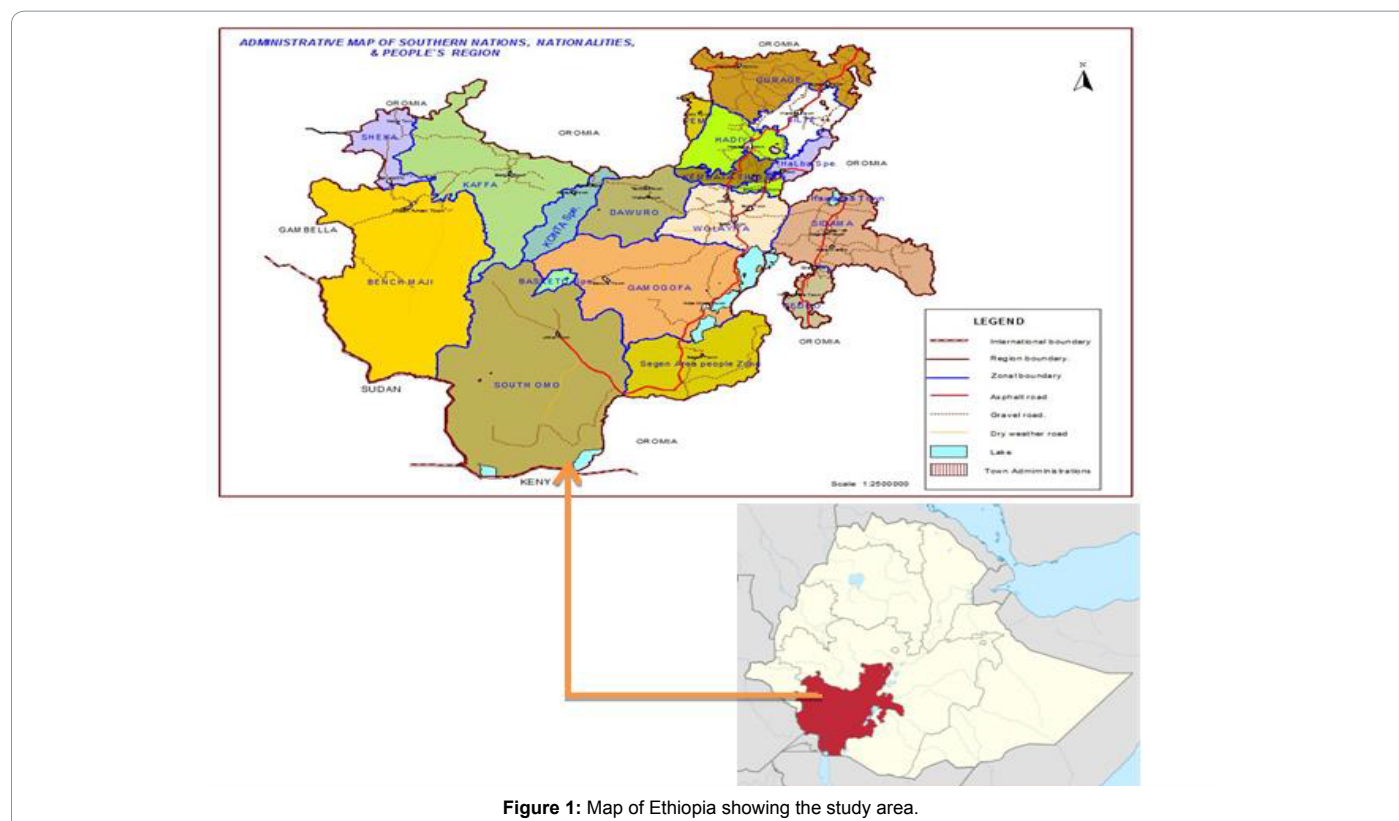


Figure 1: Map of Ethiopia showing the study area.

software. Descriptive analysis was done using means, percentages, frequency distribution, tables and graphs.

Results and Discussion

Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Tour guides, as key actors of guided tour activity and the main targets of the research objectives; they were very essential part of the study. In regard to gender distribution of the tourist guides, 56 (96.5%) were males and 2 (3.5%) were females. The age category indicate that, 23 (39.7%) of the respondents were between the age of 18 and 29 and 35 (60.3%) were between 30 and 45. In addition their marital status data demonstrate that, the majority or 43 (74%) were single and 15 (25.9%) were married. The highest educational qualification of tour guides shows that, 19 (32.8%) primary school, 29 (50%) secondary school, 4 (6.9%) were vocational or college diploma holders, and 6 (10.3%) were first degree holders. The data obtained from tour guides revealed that 9,000 ETB as the average monthly income.

Moreover, visitors were also part of the study as a main respondent. In terms of gender distribution, the study included 46 (54%) male and 39 (46%) female visitors. Age group of respondents shows that the age interval of 18-29 was 3 (3.1%), 30-45 was 29(30.2%), 45-64, (38 or 39.7%) and 60 and above age group were represented by 26 (27%). Marital status of respondents showed that 33 (34.4%) were married while 52 (54.2%) were single. Visitors highest educational qualification shows that 24 (28.2%) of the respondents were TVET/college diploma holders; 35 (41.2%) were first degree holders, and 26 (30.6%) have a status of masters and above.

Tour guiding quality assurance and regulatory systems in Ethiopia (SNNPRS)

The development and implementation of minimum guiding

standards, and rewarding guiding excellence is becoming mandatory. According to the regulations of the region of south Ethiopia, it was understood that the tourist guide could be a person who obtained a “work permit” (i.e. license) and passed a “professional examination”, apart from meeting other criteria (citizenship, school education, foreign language fluency). However, because of over dominance by the pre-organized tour guide associations, it becomes too difficult to implement regulatory and quality assurance mechanisms Hence, in practice, in the study area the quality assurance and regulatory mechanisms are found to be inconsistent. In china Qualification examination is required to become an elementary, intermediate, high and supreme guide. But in Ethiopia, specifically the SNNPRS the focus of quality assurance system is on a limited number of criteria’s and tends to overlook those most critical to harnessing issues. In this regard, indicates that:

In this region, most of the tour guides are operating without formal education and are not fluent even in at least one international language. Consequently, there is tension and resistance among tour guides not to be excluded from the profession. At the same time those with formal education are currently in high demands to join the guiding sector. However, because of these two controversial views real implementations of regulatory mechanisms become a difficult task for the government. As a result of which, the room is not open for those qualified and educated ones. Hence, those with formal education are forced and tend to be informal or illegal guides.

Of course, among the academicians, there is considerable debate about officially licensed and unlicensed or informal guides. In one hand, licensing can ensure quality and reliability, but so can certification, training and personal interest; on the other hand licensing can exclude those without formal education but with good conversational language skills. Conversely, experts suggest that at least fundamental requirements need to be taken in to consideration such as educational

qualification, proven knowledge of specific locations, technical skills, safe and efficient recreation delivery systems, emergency response systems, and detailed reporting of activities and observations.

For the sake professional service, in most countries tour guides are required to undergo formal training courses and an apprenticeship with an experienced field guide. Moreover, they are required to successfully pass the practical component, and complete a first aid course and simultaneously they have to seat for the written and practical exams. Furthermore, literatures indicate that in some other countries licenses for tour guides emphasize academic achievement, which are generally recognized as being important for successful tour guiding [20]. In this case, Black and Weiler [11] pointed out six quality assurance mechanisms that may enhance guides' quality performance. Those mechanisms are codes of conduct, professional associations, awards of excellence, training, professional certification and licensing. In this context, Prakash and Chowdhary [14] pointed out six dimensions of tour guiding training such as practical guiding skills, interpersonal (behavioral) skills, business (management) skills, knowledge of tourism products, and tourism context. In contrast to this, most tour guides in the southern region of Ethiopia lacks special training programs in the context of tour guiding.

In addition, First-aid training is also important for guides in order to give help for guests during accidents. However, the practice was found as very poor in the study area. The other mechanism that is supposed to contribute to guides to better perform their roles is the development and implementation of tour guide codes of conduct. However, the codes are generally considered to be a tool for awareness-raising rather than a form of quality control [11]. In the study area, it was found that codes of conducts (theoretically there is), awards of excellence and accreditations are not put in practice. Other countries realized the need for tour guide training. A good example is United Kingdom where tour guides are required to complete some courses and take examinations which enable them to wear the blue badges as required by laws. The trend is the same in Austria, Canada, New Zealand and Australia [1,21].

Criteria's for the licensing of tour guides and practical challenges

According to the regions Culture, Tourism and Government Communications Beauró, there are common requirements to license local guides and to be a local tourist guide every applicant needs to fulfill criteria's such as:

Be trained as a tour guide and being certified from accredited institution, be a resident of the destination visited with knowledge of tourist attractions, be highly proficient at least in English and other international languages, be able to pass both written and oral examinations organized by responsible body, be able to attend short term trainings at regular intervals in order to fill professional gaps, be able to offer proof of which he/she is free from addiction, crime and illegal activities, and be over 18 years of age.

However, practically, some of the first criteria's were found null (not put in practice). There is also lack of consistency of the criteria's across different areas which looks like that quality assurance mechanisms are judged in alignment with localized political and socio-cultural contexts. In line with it, in Singapore to be a tourist guide and to qualify for the license, candidates must fulfill minimum age and education requirements, complete theory and practical trainings, and pass two examinations administered by the Singapore Tourism Board (STB)

[22]. Along with, in many matured tourist destinations, in order to be issued with a professional or local tourist guide license, the applicant has to be medically fit, be highly proficient at least in English and other international languages, be trained as a tour guide and being certified from accredited institution, be a resident of the destination visited with knowledge of tourist attractions, be able to pass both written and oral examinations. These are the prerequisites even to get registered as a guide.

However, in SNNPRS among the 58 samples no one is found with medical certificate, English is the only international language used to guide tourists, almost all are not trained and certified as tour guides by accredited institution, no written and oral examinations at regular interval to fill professional gaps, and it is found that guides are not free from addiction. Scholars argue that to enroll for the tourist guide examinations and to provide quality services candidates need to be trained (class room and field training) in specialized subjects. It is apparent that whilst Ethiopia acknowledges the rationale for regulation and licensing in policy statements, practices on the ground do not reflect simple principles. Licensing requirements tend to be excessive, but actual regulation is very weak. Some respondents pointed out that because most of the guides did not possess skills in foreign languages such as English, French, and Spanish they were not able to serve visitors well. A respondent stated that:

There is lack of adequate qualified personnel. The tour guides at times do not have a high command of the English language, let alone French, Germany and Spanish. This makes it difficult for foreigners to get quality service.

Problems and challenges of the tour guides

Tour guides are capable of transforming a tour in to a memorable experience or vice versa and as a profession it has its own critical challenges. Due to the seasonality nature of tourism in Ethiopia the low and unstable income is a serious concern for the tour guides. In addition, there are several reservations expressed by the tour guides about their profession. In this connection, the majority of the tour guides regretted their heavy reliance on tips, the lack of job security and raised concerns around the low remuneration packages compared to the national guides. Furthermore, it is found that majority of the tour guides lacked proficiency in not only several western languages but even some local languages. The researchers used hypothetical statements of a 5 point likert scale and according to Zulkarnain, Mohammed and Omar, the determination of the mean scores are resolute as 1.00-2.32 (low), 2.33-3.65 (Medium) and 3.66-5.00 is (high) (Table 1).

In the tourism development policy of Ethiopia, the ministry claims that one of the domestic challenges facing the sector is a problem of interpretation of tourist attractions. As per the ministry, the interpretation of attractions lacks credible facts and knowledge, consistency, and the presentation is quite disorganized. On the other hand, lack of professional tourist guides is considered as one of the dissatisfaction attributes of tourists. Significantly, observations indicate as there is a dearth of information especially with the cultural aspect of tourism product and lack of professional guides with an excellent ability to speak foreign language. Moreover, cognizant with it, findings indicate that lack of training opportunities, lack of recognition, unhealthy industry practices, need for a certification or licensing system, absence of any monitoring of tour guide performance and a poor image of the profession are challenges confronting tour guides.

To this end, eight hypothetical statements which describe challenges and problems in the tour guiding practice and it is found

Problems of the tour guides	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Lack of adequate practical training and education	58	4.72	0.914
Involvement of nonprofessionals in the tour guiding practice	58	4.45	1.187
Absence of strong monitoring practice by the government	58	4.07	1.041
Lack of on the job training	57	3.49	1.104
Lack of strong licensing and certification procedure	58	3.52	1.274
Little concern for the tour guiding profession from authorities	55	4.35	1.058
Lack of interest from tour guides to upgrade themselves	58	4.05	.867
Lack of private tourism organizations providing accreditation	58	3.28	1.399

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

Table 1: Problems that the tour guides are facing.

that all the calculated mean of all hypothetical statements are greater than the 5 point likert scale mean. Thus the finding indicates that the main problems of tourist guiding are lack of adequate practical training and education which is considered as a major problem ($M=4.72$, $St.D=0.914$), and involvement of nonprofessionals in the tour guiding practice ($M=4.45$, $St.D=1.187$), little concern for the tour guiding profession from authorities ($M=4.35$, $St.D=1.058$), absence of strong monitoring practice by the government ($M=4.07$, $St.D=1.041$), and lack of interest from the tour guides to upgrade themselves ($M=4.05$, $St.D=0.867$) are the medium challenges. In line with it, Mak, Wong, and Chang, [23] found that unhealthy business practice, immaturity of the tourism market; exploitative measures of tour operators, human resource issues, and role conflict and service quality assurance mechanisms are the critical issues that affect professionalism and service quality of tour guides. In recent study, Heung suggests that the service quality of the tour guides can be evaluated through three main constructs such as core service delivery, customer orientation, and communication effectiveness. It is also observed that local guides in the study area suffer from poor English proficiency and lack of bilingual skills, and they are also blamed for providing distorted and poor interpretation to the tourists.

Moreover, even the trained tour guides in the region are blamed as they are not up to the level of good interpretation of history and cultural heritages. Most guides make illegal agreement with the souvenir shops and advice visitors to buy souvenirs from specific shops and, in return, get a commission. This creates two problems; one, price inflation on souvenir products due to commission and it discourage visitors to purchase. Two, tour guides directing visitors to limited souvenir shops create inequality in wealth distribution. The results of hypothetical statements further revealed some basic challenges for the tour guides such as absence of awards of excellence ($M=4.60$, $St.D=0.591$), seasonality ($M=4.24$, $St.D=0.657$), absence of tourist information centers at cities and sites ($M=4.03$, $St.D=1.311$), the presence of money oriented practice ($M=4.03$, $St.D=1.059$), unhealthy competition among tour guides ($M=3.62$, $St.D=1.520$), poor monitoring and regulation of tour guiding practice ($M=3.61$, $St.D=1.250$), conflict among guides ($M=3.60$, $St.D=1.413$), forcefully accompanying tourists ($M=3.50$, $St.D=1.466$), casual (fake guides) ($M=3.47$, $St.D=1.301$), involvement of non-professionals ($M=3.36$, $St.D=1.589$), and absence of organized and competitive tour guides' association ($M=3.02$, $St.D=1.356$) are found to be the medium problems. Aligned with it, all these problems generally revolves around problems created because of government policies, problems due to local authorities, problems in handling customers and problems because of competition.

Tourist satisfaction by the tour guides service in SNNPRS

Tour guiding (interpretation) is trying to produce mindful visitors, visitors who are active, questioning, and capable of reassessing the way

they view the world [24]. Hence, tourists need quality information on available options. The study seeks to identify the variables which are related to tourist satisfaction during on tour service encounter. It investigates the service performance of the tour guides on the basis of various attributes. From the hypothetical statements of tourist guide attributes, statements to be accepted includes that the tourist guides in the study area are honest and sincere, they did not impose their personal and political opinions', the guides behavior reflects dignity, and they are fair and reasonable in all dealings with all colleagues (Table 2).

However, tourists are dissatisfied with majority of the attributes such as lack of consistent information for all visitors, they take visitors to souvenir and other shopping areas based on the guides choice not rather than tourists' choice, guides solicit visitors for tipping, they use drugs and alcohol during tours, they are not voluntary to inform visitors when they are overcharged, they didn't appear neat and clean with proper uniform and badge, they use memorizing commentaries, they lack enough knowledge of the sites history and features, they didn't interpret in the language of visitor's choice, their presentation is not well organized, they didn't deliver the tour package as planned, they didn't use clear language adopted to the visitors, they don't have good knowledge of nonverbal communication, they are not very diplomatic, and they look down on a region's customs (Figure 2).

Tour guide are the essential interface between the host destination and its visitors. In fact, they are front line employees who are very much responsible for the overall impression and satisfaction with the tour services process. According to the professional tour guides association of San Antonio, a guide is a person an effective combination of enthusiasm, knowledge [facts, figures and anecdotes], personality qualities and high standards of conduct and ethics ...and providing interpretation and commentary. Hence, in essence, the work of a tour guide not only involves the transformation of information, but also presenting it in an interesting and sincere manner. Cognizant with it, the researcher was interested to evaluate the guides' knowledge and the respective satisfaction level and the finding is indicated as follows (Table 3).

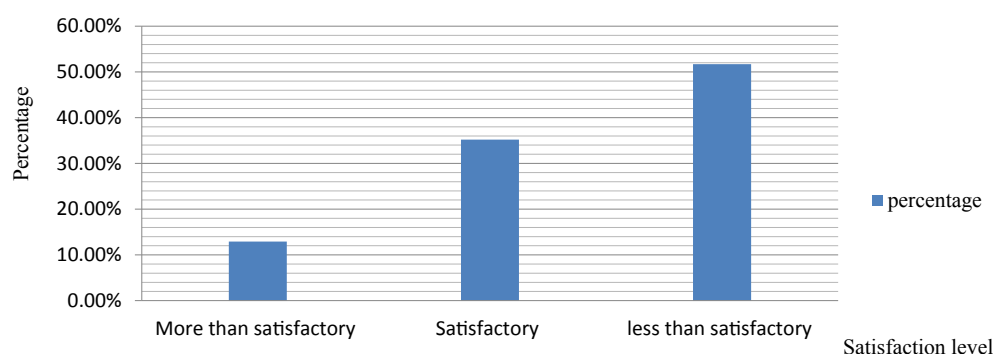
Rating of overall tourist's satisfaction by the tour guides service indicates that 51.7% rated it as less than satisfactory, 35.2% satisfactory and only 12.9% rated it as above satisfactory. The researcher specifically intended to evaluate the quality of information that tour guides provide for the tourists. Hence, superficially the result indicates that the tour guides knowledge of facts (43%), figures (43%) and anecdotes (32%) is found as below expectations (Table 3). In line with it, in the questionnaire one respondent described his satisfaction by the tour guiding service he received as:

While on foot in the villages of Dorze many young-looking men approached us making them as guides and we used some of them as

	Expectation mean	Performance mean	Mean difference	Paired t-test	P-value	Result
They deliver consistent information for all visitors	2.18	2.13	0.05	1.13	0.00	Dissatisfaction
They take visitors to souvenir and other shopping areas based on tourists' choice	3.41	2.01	1.40	1.23	0.02	Dissatisfaction
They did not solicit visitors for tipping	4.44	2.85	1.59	2.31	0.31	Dissatisfaction
They avoid using drugs and alcohol	4.53	2.12	2.14	2.15	0.13	Dissatisfaction
They inform visitors when they are overcharged	4.15	3.83	0.32	2.13	0.33	Dissatisfaction
They are fair and reasonable in all dealings with all colleagues	1.77	1.94	-0.17	-3.54	0.04	Satisfaction
They Always appear neat and clean with proper uniform and badge	4.12	1.87	2.25	2.75	0.11	Dissatisfaction
They avoid to use memorizing commentaries	4.21	2.27	1.94	2.32	0.30	Dissatisfaction
They have enough knowledge of the sites history and features	4.01	1.55	2.46	3.21	0.03	Dissatisfaction
They interpret in the language of visitor's choice	4.31	1.25	3.06	4.31	0.05	Dissatisfaction
Their presentation is well organized	1.97	1.79	0.18	3.52	0.21	Dissatisfaction
They deliver the tour package as planned	2.61	2.61	0.00	1.12	0.43	Dissatisfaction
They use clear language, adopted to the visitors	1.99	1.98	0.01	2.34	0.04	Dissatisfaction
They have good knowledge of nonverbal communication	3.17	1.69	1.48	4.71	0.32	Dissatisfaction
They are very objective and diplomatic	2.19	1.96	0.23	4.15	0.40	Dissatisfaction
They look down on a region's customs	4.53	2.08	2.45	3.33	0.21	Dissatisfaction
They are honest and sincere	1.97	1.98	-0.01	-2.22	0.15	Satisfaction
They are positive and patriotic	3.11	2.36	0.75	2.32	0.34	Dissatisfaction
They impose their personal and political opinions	1.77	3.56	-1.79	-5.36	0.41	Satisfaction
The guides' behavior reflects dignity	2.31	2.35	-0.04	-4.94	0.33	Satisfaction

Expectation-Performance=Positive=dissatisfaction; Expectation-Performance=Negative=Satisfaction.
Source: Field Survey, 2016.

Table 2: Tourist satisfaction by the tour guiding service.



Source: Field Survey, 2016.

Figure 2: Ratings of level of tourist satisfaction.

Variable	Exceeded expectations (1)	Above satisfactory (2)	Satisfactory (3)	Less than satisfactory (4)	Below expectations (5)	Mean rating	S.D
	%	%	%	%	%		
Facts	1	2	18	32	43	1.9	0.8
Figures	3	3	20	29	41	2.1	1.0
Anecdotes	4	6	17	37	32	2.0	1.0

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

Table 3: Ratings of the tour guides knowledge (facts, figures and anecdotes).

local guides before we realized how worthless they are. Almost certainly we told them more attention-grabbing belongings about the country from what we read than we learnt from them [25].

However, the result doesn't confirm the findings of Ryan [26]. They confirmed that, customer satisfaction surveys of tourists are notoriously favorable. This probably occurs because respondents are loath to state they have not enjoyed a service that they have freely chosen.

Skill gaps of the tour guides

Perspective-oriented research and literatures' points out as guides need to be all rounded and well equipped with relevant skills. Being present in person before a tourist they are expected to solve all problems of tourist- within or outside of their control. Literatures indicate that tour guides are the "face" of the industry and even of the country". Ang therefore points out that tour guides are 'buffers' between the tourist and

the site visited. Failure to do so is considered as a poor performance. As they have a pivotal role in connecting visitors with nature and culture, they are required to be highly dexterous. The skill gaps of the tour guides of the southern regions of Ethiopia were evaluated by foreign tourists and found that customer care ($M=3.58$, $St.D=1.417$), interpretation and storytelling ($M=3.56$, $St.D=1.401$), interpretive approach to communication ($M=3.48$, $St.D=1.428$), designing itineraries ($M=3.48$, $St.D=1.477$), knowledge of visitor profiles and expectations ($M=3.38$, $St.D=1.496$), and leadership and group management ($M=3.37$, $St.D=1.396$), are found to be the profound skill gaps. Nevertheless, Weiver and Black stated as tour guides are expected to be prepared and knowledgeable and are expected to provide interpretation in an inspiring and entertaining manner. However, having all these skill gaps the tour guides tend to fail to accomplish what is stated by Holloway [3] as tour guides are:

Information giver and fountain of knowledge, teacher or instructor, motivator and initiator into the rites of tourist experiences, missionary or ambassador for their country, entertainer or catalyst for the group, confident, shepherd, and ministering angel, group leader and disciplinarian.

Cognizant with it, Cohen [2] insists that tour guides should display high level professional skill and intimate knowledge of local culture. In the same fashion, Pond [1] in her seminal work suggests:

The guide is entrusted with the public relations missions to encapsulate the essence of a place and to be a window onto a site, region, or country.

Therefore, studies mention that guides without having the required skills will fail to shoulder the roles of information giver, leader, motivator of conservation values and social catalyst. Moreover, they will fail to be cultural broker/mediator, navigator/protector, tour/group manager [27], public relations representative.

Motivations and perceptions of the tour guides towards the profession

Unlike other professions, as it has been confirmed by the respondents, entering the profession of tourist guiding is mostly unplanned and unexpected. However, to the contrary, few people are thinking or “fantasizing” of becoming a tourist guide. Cognizant to it, observations indicate that over the last few years there has been a greater interest in tour guide profession in southern regions of Ethiopia [28-35]. However, trends and observations show that choosing this profession mostly comes as a consequence of former direct contact made by an individual through acquaintances and friends in the tourism industry. Moreover, some of the interviewed pointed out that it was the acquaintance with someone who already had been a guide or tour escort and thus served as a role model which influenced their decision to join the sector. For this purpose the researchers were intended to identify the motivational factors that led to choose tour guiding as a profession and career [36-39].

One of the imperative results was the descriptive statistics about the motives about to become tour guides. While the mean varied between 3.96 to 2.33 in a 5 point likert scales with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement with the stated statement. So greater the value of rating on the scale more does the respondent agree with the statement. Hence the analysis suggests that networking ($M=3.96$, $St.D=1.133$), travel needs ($M=3.86$, $St.D=1.277$), autonomy ($M=3.83$, $St.D=1.378$), job quality ($M=3.69$, $St.D=1.417$), and respect ($M=3.67$, $St.D=1.289$), are the high mean scores whereas,

personal satisfaction ($M=3.61$, $St.D=1.424$) and growth anticipation ($M=3.59$, $St.D=1.377$) are the medium factors that motivate the guides to join the guiding as a profession. The top five motives were all close to five and all had standard deviations less than 0.5 which indicates that these motives were important with little inter respondent variation. The means value of variables was relatively small and the dispersion for many variables was close to 1 or more. To understand the variability and reduce the number of variables factor analysis using the principal component method of extraction was used to extract values greater than 1. Hence, an eight factor solution explaining 85.7% of total variance appeared most interpretable [40-43].

Conclusions

Despite the growth of the sector and the number of tourists too, the study confirms the absence of a professional as well as a local tour guiding quality assurance and regulatory mechanisms and standards. Although numerous types of standards and quality assurance systems with relevance to tour guiding exist, none directly address the range of qualifications and experience necessary for excellent travel guiding. Even though, there are detailed government regulations specifying training requirements in order to receive a local or professional guide certification, on the ground the standard is not enforced or regulated in any way by the concerned governmental organizations. In addition, many destinations also have guide associations, which established its own codes of operating (ethics) but practically it is not working. In principle, guides must be trained with an emphasis on customer service, must possess strong abilities in verbal and non-verbal communication, must have received current training and licenses, must possess a medical certification, must be knowledgeable about relevant local history and cultures and present accurate information, and must be knowledgeable about relevant natural history in the environments what they visit, must be highly proficient at least in English and other international languages, and educational techniques must be used to share this information in an engaging manner with guests. However, in practice these competencies are not considered in certifying the guides. In line with it, the researcher was interested to assess the basic problems and challenges in the tour guiding profession in the case area. Hence, lack of adequate practical training and education, involvement of nonprofessionals in the tour guiding practice, absence of strong monitoring practice by the government, lack of on the job training, lack of strong licensing and certification procedure, little concern for the tour guiding profession from authorities, lack of interest from tour guides to upgrade themselves, and lack of private tourism organizations providing accreditations are found to be basic problems for the guides. Moreover, seasonality, absence of awards of excellence, the presence of money oriented practice, unhealthy competition between tour guides, poor monitoring and regulation of tour guiding practice, absence of organized and competitive tour guides' association, casual (fake guides), conflict among local guides and external national guides, forcefully accompanying tourists, and involvement of non-professionals are the chronic challenges.

Concurrent with it, the researcher was interested to evaluate the tourist satisfaction by the guides service and found that the guides deliver inconsistent information for all visitors, they take visitors to souvenir and other shopping areas not based on tourists' choice, they solicit visitors for tipping, they use drugs and alcohol, they did not inform visitors when they are overcharged, they failed to appear neat and clean with proper uniform and badge, they use memorizing commentaries, they have no enough knowledge of the sites history and features, they failed to interpret in the language of visitor's choice,

they have no good knowledge of nonverbal communication. Rating of overall tour satisfaction indicates that 51.7% of the tourists are not satisfied in the overall tour guiding services. The level of knowledge of the guides in terms of facts, figures and anecdotes are below the tourists' expectation. It is also found that customer care, interpretive approach to communication, interpretation and storytelling, conflict and problem handling, legal aspects, leadership and group management, biology, behavior, habitat and threats, heritage conservation and management, knowledge of visitor profiles and expectations, and designing itineraries are found to be the skill gaps of the tour guides. Further, the researcher was eager to assess the motivational factors to join the tour guiding profession and found that networking, travel needs, autonomy, job quality, personal satisfaction, and future growth anticipation of the sector are the top motivational factors that initiate guides to join the profession as a local guide. Hence, this paper argues that altruism, the existence of strong quality assurance and regulatory mechanisms (licensing, certification, code of ethics, and awards of excellence in addition with a body of knowledge, motivation and specialist skills are key dimensions of tour guiding professionalism.

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