

Evaluation of Tour Guides Roles and Required Skills to Enhance Tourist Experience in Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to examine why destinations conduct tour guiding services, techniques applied guiding and interpretation and finally to assess the skills and knowledge gap that exist. The study adopted an exploratory design and combined both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. The target group of the study was composed of safari guides, naturalists; freelance whose terms of the contract were either permanent or temporary. The findings indicated that the popular methods of guiding and interpretation is briefing customers before, within and after the tour, which is used by majority (87%) of the respondents. Despite most guides possessing a smartphone that are capable of uploading digital field guides most guides had not uploaded guiding software. The study recommends that safari guides be exposed to smart guiding technologies to complement other guiding methods.

Keywords: Safari guide; Smart guiding; Technology; Skills gap

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Background of the Study

Assume that you are a visitor in an archaeological museum in Magadi in Kenya or climbing the Everest Mountain from Nepal without a guide. What would your experience be as compared to having the same activities accompanied by an experienced guide? The studies unveil the second scenario and opine that tour guides are the most influential person to clients on an adventure holiday in a destination. Due to several roles and duties, guides perform in a destination, it would be therefore necessary for any destination to audit their skills and knowledge to identify any gap. This study, therefore, intends to examine why destinations conduct tour guiding services and techniques applied guiding and interpretation and finally to assess the skills and knowledge gap that exist. The findings would therefore guide stakeholders in tourism in policy formulations in training, curriculum standardization, and development, and finally categorizations of guides. Safari guides need to be exposed to information technology which they can also use during the guiding tour. Visual and audio tools of guiding can also be used to complement other guiding methods, such as posters and interpretation boards on the attractions visited.

Literature Review on Roles and Duties of a Tour Guide

A skillful guide is one of the most valuable assets a destination can have since they give the face of the destination [1-4] in his study summarized and confirmed that is representative of a destination and site visited. Scholars such as [5-7] in their studies acknowledged that their roles are innumerable [8]. Noted that tour guides give direction to the visitors on the areas and destination visited, interact with the visitors more than any other person in the supply chain and communicate with the visitors sharing cultural heritage, translate and interpret unfamiliar environment to the visitor. [9-11] concurred with Cohen but added that tour guides are believed to be key players in the tourism industry and are responsible for the visitor's satisfaction in a destination. They make a destination more enjoyable by providing information about the culture and heritage of a destination. Their performance influences customers' loyalty to a destination and even attracts new businesses [12-13]. Guide's performance affects the image of a tour operator and that of a destination [4,14]. Similarly, [15-16] established that ineffective tour guiding may have adverse effects on tourists' holidays which might, in turn, affect their loyalty or even decline in business. Since visitors spend little time at a destination, they normally require someone to assist them to understand the tradition, beliefs, and culture of the destination visited, within the shortest time available. Therefore, the need for a qualified guide can be emphasized [17-19]. In their study identified three roles of tour guides where they noted that they contribute to the quality of visitors experience by providing

information on available options so that visitors can make their best choice about what they do and where they go. Accordingly, guides influence the choices for the destinations, visitors go to and the type of activities they engage in. Guides further provide information on the safety and comfort of a destination, thus preparing visitors to cope with difficulties that they may encounter. They create an experience so that visitors can participate in activities such as guided walks, eco-tours, and visits to museums and art galleries [18,4]. Reiterated that guides provide an interpretational, educational, and cultural understanding of a destination. As a result, interpretation is increasingly recognized as key in the tourism industry and scholars have agreed that guiding is a key function of enhancing customer satisfaction [4,20]. This interpretation comes in two forms: Firstly, personal interpretations which can be in form of a talk, demonstration, puppet shows, living history, storytelling nature walks or tours, and secondly, a non-personal interpretation which can be the use of signs, exhibits, self-guided trails and interact with computers Beck: Cable 2002. Interpretation has also been used by guides as a management strategy of tourism, recreation, natural and cultural resources. Guides, as interpreters help the audience to connect with the history and culture of a destination. The duties of tour guides also include managing activities related to visitors' satisfaction starting from their arrival point, until the day that the visitor departs. Guides have difficult duties, such as offering the best services to the visitors, to make them feel satisfied and remind them to come back to the destination not alone, but also by inviting friends, families or colleagues as proof that they are really satisfied and impressed with the destination they visited. Tour guides act as public relations officers for their firms that sell and market destinations to visitors. Likewise, [21] argue that guides operating in an ecotourism site have an additional role as a motivator. They encourage visitors to be environmentally responsible as they present information which aids the visitors to understand and appreciate the environment [14]. Argue that tour guides are front-line employees who are responsible for the overall impression of the tour services. They are responsible for visitors to be satisfied by the services provided [22]. With all these expected roles and duties, the latter questions need to be taken into consideration;

what kinds of training do the tour guides need to go through? What is the best curriculum to train an excellent guide?.

Study Methodology

The study adopted an exploratory design and combined both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. Qualitative data was collected from three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) composed of twelve participants each. The quantitative data were collected through research administered questionnaires that were randomly distributed to driver guides who had attended a two weeks refresher course in Kenya Utalii College. The target group of the study was composed of safari guides, naturists; freelance whose terms of the contract were either permanent or temporary. In total, 102 respondents participated in the study. To ascertain the validity and reliability of the data collection tools, a pilot test on the questionnaires was done and was found to have Cronbach's alpha of 0.964 which was satisfactory. The reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered acceptable in most social science research. [23-24].

Findings on Respondent's Demographic Profile

Of the total 102 respondents who participated in the study, 96 % ($\chi^2=114.636$, $p<0.05$) were males and 4% were females meaning that males were significantly higher than females showing that the career is male-dominated. The majority (70%) had worked for less than 10 years, while 30% had worked between ten and twenty years. A minority of 5 % had worked for over 21 years. About their terms of employment, 64 % was on permanent employment while the rest 37% was either on contract or freelance. Also noted was, (42%) had acquired their training formally in tourism training colleges, while 37% had on-job training and the rest did not have any formal training.

Findings on Reasons for Offering Guiding and Interpretation Services

Respondents were asked to give reasons why they offer guiding and interpretation services to their customers. 12 opinion statements were rated using a 3-point Likert scale: 'agree', 'not sure', and 'disagree' as provided in (Table 1).

Table 1: Reasons for guiding.

Reasons why the company offers guiding and interpretation services			
Opinion statements	% Agreed	% Not sure	% Disagree
To enhance customer experience	77.3	6.1	6.1
So that customers can recommend your company to another person	57.6	18.2	12.1
To share skills and knowledge with the customer	53	10.6	27.3
To make the customer happy and enhance his experience	47	12.1	24.2
Customers demand guiding and interpretation services	83.3	4.5	4.5
To offer better services than competitors	71.2	15.2	7.6
To use guiding and interpretation as a marketing tool	48.5	12.1	21.2
To Educate customers on the tourism product	80.3	3	4.5
To Differentiate your services from other companies	74.2	9.1	4.5
Because the company requires it to be conducted	81.8	7.6	4.5

So that customers can recommend the guide to other	80.3	9.1	3
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Reason for Offering Visitors Guiding and Interpretation Service

Later, the Principle Component Analysis method of data extraction was run using Varimax rotation with the maximum iteration of .25 to reduce data into a small number that would explain most of the variance. Three factors were generated out of 12 items and labeled according to the reasons they represented. The three items had an eigenvalue above one and could explain a total variance of 62.4% and had a loading factor of 0 .893, 0.833,

and 0.820 respectively. The internal consistency of the questions was examined and gave a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.818 which represented sufficient reliability as guided by [25]. This means that the three statements explain a total of 63 % of the variance in the first objective see (Table 2). The factors had a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy of 0.727 which indicated that enough items from the question could be predicted by the factors. Bartlett test of Sphericity was significant at 0.05 meaning that the variables are correlated enough to provide a reasonable basis for factor analysis.

Table 2: Reasons for offering visitors guiding and interpretation service.

Reasons for offering visitors guiding and interpretation service				
Statements	Loading factor	Eigenvalue	% variance	Cumulative %
It is an essential part of customer satisfaction	0.893	4.441	37.011	37.011
To enhance customer experience	0.833	2.033	16.944	53.955
So that customers can recommend the company to other persons	0.82	1.024	8.536	62.491
Cronbach’s alpha	0.818			

Descriptive analysis of the data generated from the three factors indicated that one of the major reasons why tour guides offer guiding services to customers is because these services are essential for customer satisfaction, enhance the visitor experience, and may recommend their company to new customers and visitors.

Emerging Trends in Tourist Guiding Technology

Similarly, another factor analysis was conducted to investigate

what tools and facilities, the tour guides use when guiding and the frequency these tools are used. This question had 16 items which the respondents had to rate using a 5-point Likert scale: all the times, sometimes, not sure, rarely, and never. Four items were extracted all of which had an eigenvalue of more than one representing a cumulative variance of 76%. The four items had a loading factor of 0.829, 0.818, 0.817, and 0.791 respectively (Table 3).

Table 3: Methods and facilities used in guiding and interpretation.

Guiding methods	Loading factor	Eigenvalue	% of variance	% Cumulative
Giving briefing customers before within and after the tour	0.829	8.723	54.517	54.5
Offering CD, DVD, and videos tapes on attractions visited	0.818	1.294	8.09	62.6
Interpreting information, signs, and posters	0.817	1.253	7.829	70.4
Engaging on contract qualified guides for different tourist circuits in Kenya	0.791	1.035	6.471	76.9

Digital Smart Guiding and Smartphones App in Guiding and Interpretation

The study noted that despite most guides possessing a smartphone that is capable of uploading upload digital field guides such as Stuarts African mammals, Tourguru, Guideme, Izitravel, Melin, Ibird which were popular in South Africa rarely do use them. They acknowledged that Digital field guide apps for instance make bird identification quicker and allow users to filter species list to what occurs in the area. Having both photos and drawings of species makes identification easier while being able to play a bird's call at the touch of a button is very useful. Apps also feature a 'smart search' where they offer up a list of possibilities based on the information you enter about size, color, beak shape, and habitat. The findings indicated that one of the popular methods

of guiding and interpretation is briefing customers before, within and after the tour, where 87% of the respondents use this method all the time. The study noted that despite most guides possessing a smartphone that is capable of uploading upload digital field guides. Although information technology is believed to have revolutionized business operations in the tourism industry, this has not been the case in the guiding career in Kenya. Some of the reasons might be that most of the elderly driver’s guides (over 50yrs) are not computer literate and may have not embraced ICT as a tool to be used in guiding and interpretation. Traditional methods used by the respondents were the use of interpretation signs, posters, and signals in the area(s) visited were more than 50% agreed to use this method all the time. Respondents were asked how often they engage specialized to accompany visitors

on special interest tours. Only 24% of respondents do it all the time while 21. % rarely engages them. New mobile technologies are a great way to appeal to a wider audience and engage visitors by leveraging the new uses of digital technology. Through technology, museums and other cultural sites can invent new ways to convey knowledge for all publics [26]. The visitor experience is thus enhanced by employing those innovative solutions such as mobile tour apps. An example of such technology is Orpheo and story apps which allow the guide and the visitor to create content, share content and digitize visitors' collections and memories. The applications are dedicated to museums, cultural and tourist sites. Mobile applications are easily modifiable with the high-performance content management system. From the Internet-connected computer, you can access the Content Management Systems at any time and modify or update your visit path and statistics on the application. Historic Walking Tour apps are also available in Apple iTunes App Store and Google Play Store.

Guiding Techniques Applied In Kenya

Respondents were asked how often they use different guiding techniques and their responses rated on a 5-point Likert scale. About 85% of them said that they offer general information to the visitors on attractions visited [27-30]. A majority (67%) used qualified guides who accompany the visitors on safari while 19% use qualified guides less often. A minority (4%) hardly uses qualified guides. A follow-up question indicated that about 35% of companies rarely use specialized guides for special activities. This means that though companies use qualified guides only 40% will offer specialized guides for the activity visited. It is worth noting that some companies will engage on contract a guide depending on the tourist circuit visited. If the visitors are interested in marine ecology, the company uses an expert on

marine, historical sites, ornithology as the visitors might demand. It is very expensive to have specialized guides for all attractions because companies find it cheaper to hire their services upon request. Kenya's tourism product is diverse. Visitors come to Kenya for various interests [31-34]. Among them are watching wildlife, visiting historical and archeological sites, and visiting cultural sites while others come to enjoy the sea, sun, and sand at the coast. Visitors, who are interested in bird watching and archaeological sites, often will require tour guides who are well trained and have skills and knowledge on birdlife, mammals of Kenya as well as other sites of interest. This is the main reason why specialized tour guides might be needed. Visitors without such guides rely wholly on the site guides who might not be enough to handle all the visitors at any given time, thus leaving the visitors to bring their guide. Respondents were asked to rate which materials they offer to the visitors to supplements information given by the guides. Only 42% of respondents use brochures and other written materials to interpret attractions visited. This was higher as compared to 30% who use CDs, DVDs and videotapes to assist visitors to interpret attraction visited. The majority (74%) have interpretation materials for children as well. Though most attractions have resident guides, only 40% of respondent's use their services at all times, while 20% never use their services. It was worth noting that more than 30% of the respondents do not offer any guidebooks for the areas visited. The advice the visitors to come with their guide books or take them to the bookshops where they can buy any maps of written or audio materials that they may need for the tour. Most hotels and resorts are well stocked with such materials (Table 4). More than 80% of respondents offer interpretation on-site visited at all times. Though all respondents have a website, only 25% of respondents prefer their visitors to their website and other online resources, while more than 30% rarely use their sites.

Table 4: Guiding and interpretation methods used by guides in Kenya.

Percentage usage						
		All times	Some times	Not sure	Rarely	Never
i.	Offering general information on attractions visited.	84.8	6.1	3		
ii.	Using qualified guides to accompany the customer	66.7	18.2	4.5		
iii.	Using specialized guides for each special activity or interest	45.5	34.8	1.5	9.1	1.5
iv.	Offering brochures and other written materials on attractions visited.	34.8	42.4	3	10.6	1.5
v.	Engaging on contract qualified guides for different tourist circuits in Kenya	24.2	33.3	7.6	21.2	7.6
vi.	Encourage customers to participate in activities during the safari	48.5	30.3	3	4.5	7.6
vii.	Offering CD, DVD, and videos tapes on attractions visited	6.1	28.8	4.5	30.3	25.8
viii.	Use resident guides of attractions visited to guide your visitors	34.8	39.4	1.59.1	10.6	

ix.	Offering guidebooks to customers during the tour	18.2	43.9	3	15.2	15.3
x.	Giving talks on sites and attractions visited	78.8	12.1	1.5	1.5	9
xi.	Giving children information and material during the safari.	42.4	31.8	1.5	9.1	7.6
xii.	Giving talks en route to attractions and sites	71.2	16.7	1.5	1.5	
xiii.	Giving briefing customers before, within and after the tour	87.9	6.1			
xiv.	Interpreting information, signs, and posters	51.5	22.7	3	10.6	
xv.	Giving lectures by the hosts of attraction or site	40.9	33.3	4.5	6.1	4.5
xvi.	Directing customers to online information on the internet	24.2	30.3	4.5	12.1	18.2

Audit of Tour Guiding Skills and Knowledge in Specialized Areas

There was a need for tour guides on how they rate themselves in different areas. The respondents were to rate themselves using a 5-point Likert scale starting with 'excellent, good, average, poor and very poor. Most respondents had formal training in colleges while a minority (5%) had training at a university level. Though most Kenya universities offer training in botany, zoology, and archaeology, very few of the graduates work as guides. Guiding as a career is not well established in Kenya due to the low pay and seasonality of the career. Kenya has only two high seasons, those are when the number of visitors is high and when the services of guides are needed. Most tour companies range from small to medium size employing less than 10 employees. Most of them are family-owned and have a manager who engages services of tour guides once in a while. Others will employ a guide on a contract or hire the services of a freelance tour guide which is normally lower compared to employing one guide permanently. Driver

guides sometimes use the services of step-on guides for the destination visited. Driver guides were asked to do self-evaluation and rate themselves on guiding skills and knowledge, 60% of the respondents rated their skill on mammals and birdlife of Kenya as good. More than 40% rated their skills on reptiles between average and very poor. The majority 70% rated their skill on insects between average and poor. The rating of the following areas which was rated low was on flowering and non-flowering plants, archaeology, and marine ecology. The majority of the respondents rated their skills on customers care, ecotourism, and the history of national parks, and the concept of sustainable tourism between excellent and good. To survive in the field as a tour guide, a guide must be well informed on the 'big five' of Kenya's. Those are namely: elephant, lion leopard, buffalo, and the endangered rhino, which remains one of the most visited animals for most tourists, who would like to, see it at least once on a safari in Kenya. The summary of the findings is given in (Table 5).

Table 5: Tour guides self-evaluation on guiding skills and knowledge on selected areas.

Rate your guiding and interpretation skills and knowledge for the following specialized services					
		Excellent %	Good %	Average %	Poor %
i.	Mammals of Kenya	48.5	31.8	15.2	
ii.	Birds of Kenya	33.3	33.3	27.3	1.5
iii.	Reptiles of Kenya	25.8	31.8	28.8	3
iv.	Insects of Kenya	19.7	28.8	31.8	10.8
v.	Flowering plants	25.5	24.2	28.8	9.2
vi.	Nonflowering plants	16.7	24.2	33.3	12.3
vii.	Kenyan's Cultures and traditions	43.9	24.2	22.7	4.5
viii.	Archeological sites	13.6	51.5	18.2	7.6
ix.	Historical sites	28.8	34.8	21.2	7.6
x.	Marine ecology	13.6	39.4	27.3	10.6
xi.	Customer service	43.9	28.8	15.2	2
xii.	Communication skills	48.5	27.3	18.2	
xiii.	Sustainable tourism principles	28.5	39.4	22.7	7.6

xiv.	Geographical features and landscape	34.8	42.4	15.2	
xv.	National parks and reserves	48.5	34.8	12.1	4.5
xvi.	Eco-tourism principles	27.5	39.4	24.2	1.5

From these findings, the author can conclude that safari guides have excellent skills in some mammals and birdlife of East Africa, but more training is needed. Guides require more training on archaeological sites, insects, and marine ecology. In general, there is a need for continuous training for guides who accompany special interest tours within Kenya and other East African countries.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This finding concludes that though there are many methods tour guides can use briefing before and with the tour as the most popular method. Tour firms and other visitor attractions such as museums, national parks, and archaeological sites need to invest more in training guides on available technologies in their specific areas. Safari guides need to be exposed to information technology which they can also use during the guiding tour. Visual and audio tools of guiding can also be used to complement other guiding methods, such as posters and interpretation boards on the attractions visited. The study noted that most guides have not embraced new guiding technologies such as virtual reality tours, artificial intelligent tours, digital translations, robotics, and many other technologies. These are the new trends and the tour guides must be ready to adopt them where applicable. These findings show that tour companies must invest in training their guides in different areas as their customer might demand. Since most visitors visit national parks to watch mammals, bird's insects, reptiles, insects, and other geographical features like the Great Rift Valley. Drive guides need to show that they are trained in all these areas to be resourceful to the visitors and enhance their satisfaction. Driver guides should be encouraged to involve the visitors to participate in activities such as dances, art and craft decoration at the destination visited. This will give them firsthand experience of the culture and the tradition of the host destination. Electronic media can be a useful tool that guides can use to assist them in guiding. Since many companies have video clips on their website, guides can direct the visitors to visit the site where additional information can be found. They can also advise visitors on the availability of online guide books.

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