

Tour guides: Roles, challenges and desired competences

A review of literature

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Abstract:-

It is important to understand that tour guides play an important role in a tourist experience at a destination. As a frontline service provider they leave a lasting impression. Since tourism has multiple stakeholders, each has different expectations from a tour guide. Accordingly at different places and times, different roles have been envisaged for tour guides. This paper is a review of literature scanning the importance of tour guides; roles that different stakeholders and researchers have outlined for guides; the challenges they face; and, the debate on building competence of these guides. This paper evaluates different opinions to understand what guides should be expected to do. There is very little reference to researches that analyse challenges that tour guides face. Paper also tries to assimilate research references to challenges to tour-guiding. Last section reviews research related to approaches to guide competence building.

Key words: Tour guide, role, challenges of tour guiding, training, training content, literature review

INTRODUCTION

In India tour guiding is a rather fragmented professional work. Individuals must obtain a license to work as tour guides. As of now, there is a three tier tour guiding system- local level guides, state level guides and regional level guides. The tier is not a professional or educational hierarchy; rather it is based on area of operation. Training is a prerequisite for obtaining a tour-guide license. Such license is issued by relevant authority to allow an individual to guide tourists in a particular area. Licensing authority is different for each level and area of operations and many times this results in duplication of licensing and training efforts.

Generally, local municipal authorities are responsible for training and licensing of local level guides. The training is organized in a variety of formats and structures. Normally the local municipal authorities may tie up with local university or college/ NGO/ local or state tourism authorities. Generally these are need based training

programmes. It could focus on a particular monument (say for example *Fatehpuri Sikri*) or an activity (a theme park) or may be targeted at a particular community (a tribal or rural community). The duration of training programmes also varies from 3 to 10 days. For state level tour guide licensing also there are different practices. In many states (like Madhya Pradesh (MP) and Rajasthan) tour guide training and licensing is the responsibility of state tourism development corporations while in some cases (like in case of Uttar Pradesh) state governments shoulder this responsibility. While in Madhya Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation (MPSTDC) outsources training of guides to Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management, Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation (RTDC) has its own institution Rajasthan Institute of Tourism Management (RITMAN) that organizes training. In case of UP, the government has tied up with Lucknow University to train tourguides. The duration of programme may vary from 10 days to 9 weeks.

Regional level Guide Training Programme (RLGTP) has been streamlined over last few years. Earlier, Regional Directors were responsible for organizing the training. However, beginning 2005, Ministry of Tourism has asked IITM to conduct such training. Financial support is being provided under CBSP scheme of Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. As of now the highest level, the regional level tour guides, can guide tourists over an entire region that comprises of a few states. The entire country is divided into 5 regions.

At different levels candidates with different educational levels are recruited to be tour guides. For the RLGTP an aspirant should be a graduate. However, many need based local level guide training programmes accept individuals with lower educational competencies. Candidates from different academic, professional and socio-economic backgrounds participate and get trained in these programmes. Domicile is often an important criterion for recruiting trainees. This is perhaps driven by two considerations. One, the local candidate is acquainted with local area; and two, such recruitment would create employment for host community.

With passage of time regional level guide training programmes (RLGTP) as well as many state level guide training programmes are getting streamlined. However, such programmes are inadvertently creating guides with similar skills and capabilities. This too is skewed in favour of heritage and culture guides. This was perhaps so as Archeological Survey of India (ASI) was one of the important stakeholders.

However, these programmes do not focus on tour guides with other specialties like adventure guiding, nature guiding, foreign language guides, etc. At the input level there are candidates who possess different skills and competencies and have different lengths of experience in the trade and therefore have different expectations from such programmes; on the other hand at the output side stakeholders especially the tourist with different needs and expectations fails to find a specialist tour guide with certain expertise. The training programme, it is felt, should allow guides to gradually specialize to create perceived value differentiation by virtue of being linguists, circuit experts, heritage guides, eco-guides, cuisine specialists, adventure, guides, etc.

Since tourism has multiple stake holders, each have different expectations from tour guides. This paper aims to review literature to understand the roles tour guides are expected to play. The paper begins with understanding the 'importance' of a tour guide for the various stakeholders. The paper also reviews earlier work focused on training of tour guides for developing capabilities to address different needs in different situations. Training system should also understand the challenges faced by the tour guides so that relevant inputs and counselling can be part of such training programmes.

Importance of tour guides

Tour guides play an important and central role in tourism. Dahles (2002) maintain that tour guiding constitutes a strategic factor in the representation of a destination area and in influencing the quality of tourist experience, length of stay, and the resulting economic benefits for a local community. Tour guides are one of the most important components of a tourist's experience at a destination. They facilitate tourists and help them create an experience for self. Tour guides are frontline staff who provide the 'moment of truth' for tourists, and can make or break the trip (Zhang and Chow, 2004). Tourist could have a good experience of all elements of destination performing as desired and tour guide providing the necessary connect. It could otherwise be a not so good performance of destination elements, but an adept tour guide may moderate tourists' experience to a good feel. On the other hand a destination may be well prepared for a superior tourist experience; however, an

unprofessional tour guide may spoil all for the tourists. It is suggested that tour guides are responsible for tourist satisfaction with services provided in destinations. According to Ham (1992) and Moscardo (1998), interpretation enhances visitor satisfaction and contributes to the commercial viability of tourism operations. Their (tour guides) performance to large extent affects repeat and new business, and also the image of their tour companies and even the destinations themselves (Geva and Goldman, 1991; Mossberg, 1995; Pearce, 1982; Schmidt, 1979; Whipple and Thach, 1988; Wong, Ap and Sandiford, 1998). According to Moscardo (1996):

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

Moscardo (1998) identifies three primary ways in which tour guides can help tourist enhance the quality of their experience- (1) providing information on available options so that tourist can make the best choices about what they do and where they go; (2) providing information to encourage safety and comfort so tourist know how to cope with and better manage encountered difficulties (e.g. advise on drinking water) and understand messages given by the warning signs (e.g. do not smoke here); and (3) creating the actual experience so that tourist can participate in activities such as heritage walks, adventure, visit art galleries, and learn in areas of educational interest.

Ministry of Tourism, Government of India realises the importance of guides as instrumental for a superior tourist experience. "Guides play a vital role in bringing satisfaction to tourists visiting a country or region/state. The opportunity of direct interaction with the tourists makes them all the more responsible for projecting the correct image of the country/region, giving factually correct information about the destination, ensuring the safety and well being of the tourists as well as pleasant and satisfying stay for them during their visits" (Ministry of Tourism, GoI, 2005).

Therefore, the competence that tour guides may possess and the role guides must play cannot be left to chance- it must be carefully conceived by stakeholders including destination managers. Understandably, roles of guides in conveying information, offering explanations and developing narrations have become a current research theme (Dahles, 2002). As competition increases, different stakeholders like governments, media, industry, etc. expect tour guides to play a larger role well beyond welcoming and informing tourists. They are no longer isolated individual operators. They have to be a part of a destination's strategy. Researchers like Gronroos (1978) and Geva &

Goldman (1991) have suggested that ‘it is the guide that sells the next tour.’ Accordingly, role of guides is influenced by who drives a destination’s strategy and who is responsible for organizing tour guides at a destination. For example, in country like India, tour guide training and licensing is a responsibility of government (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India for Regional Level Guides; State Tourism Departments for State level Guides; and in many cases municipal authorities for Local Level Guides) and tour guides are expected to be disseminator of information and cultural ambassadors. In cases, like in Taiwan, where tour companies should nominate/ sponsor an individual to tour guide training programme, they are expected to play a role of tour manager. Where immediate community and LTO (example small island destinations) organizes guide training, sustainability, tourist spending and

motivating tourist to stay longer are included in responsibilities of a tour guide.

Role of a tour guide

Tour guides are referred to by other terms in literature. These include tourist guide, step on guides, city guides, interpreters, escorts, tour escorts and in some cases tour leaders and tour managers. Tour guides have also been described by several authors as “an information giver and fount of knowledge,” “mentor” (Cohen, 1985), “a mediator” (de Kadt, 1979; Nettekoven, 1979; Pearce, 1982), “culture broker” (McKean, 1976) and “middleman” (van den Berghe, 1980), etc. Zhang and Chow (2004) have summarized the different roles of a tour guide. The same has been extended and presented below:

Table: Published reference to roles of tour guide

Roles	Researchers	Year
<i>Actors</i>	Holloway	1981
<i>Ambassador</i>	Holloway	1981
<i>Buffer</i>	Schmidt	1979
	Pearce	1982
	Wong, Ap and Sandiford	1998
<i>Caretaker</i>	Fine and Speer	1985
<i>Catalyst</i>	Holloway	1981
<i>Cultural broker</i>	McKean	1976
	Holloway	1981
	Katz	1985
	Ap and Wong	2001
<i>Educator</i>	Holloway	1981
	Pond	1993
<i>Entrepreneur</i>	Dahles	1998
	Bras	1999
	Chowdhary and Prakash	2008
<i>Facilitator</i>	Pond	1993
<i>Host</i>	Pond	1993
<i>Information giver</i>	Holloway	1981
	Hughes	1991
<i>Intermediary</i>	Schmidt	1979
	Ryan and Dewar	1995
<i>Interpreter</i>	Tilden	1957
<i>Leader</i>	Cohen	1985
	Geva and Goldman	1991
<i>Manager</i>	Pond	1993
<i>Mediator</i>	de Kadt	1979
	Nettekoven	1979
	Schmidt	1979
	Holloway	1981
	Cohen	1985
	Katz	1985
	Gurung, Simmons and Devlin	1996

<i>Mentor</i>	Cohen	1985
<i>Middleman</i>	van den Berghe	1980
<i>Organiser</i>	Hughes	1991
	Pearce	1982
	Schuchat	1983
<i>Pathfinder</i>	Cohen	1985
<i>Path breaker</i>	Cohen	1985
<i>PR Representative</i>	Pond	1993
<i>Salesperson</i>	Fine and Speer	1985
	Gronroos	1978
<i>Shaman</i>	Schmidt	1979
<i>Teacher</i>	Holloway	1981
	Pearce	1982
	Fine and Speer	1985
	Mancini	2001

As mentioned earlier, different stake holders expect different roles from tour guides. Over the time dynamics at destination results in typical local equilibrium about what guides should do. Way back in 1957, Tilden suggested that role of a guide is to interpret. He maintains that interpretation is an educational activity aimed at revealing meanings and relationships to people about the places they visit and the things they see and do there. Perhaps Holloway (1981) was the first to methodically study tour guides. He came up with the role theory. According to him 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.

In India, as in many other oriental destination, culture and heritage are the main tourism products and above notion of a tour guide's role is largely accepted even now. Guides are expected to play an important role as information disseminators (Holloway, 1981) whose primary responsibility is to selecting, glossing, and interpreting sights (Bowman, 1992; Cohen, 1985; Schmidt, 1979). It is not about 'telling' stories and history associated with attractions, rather, a tour guide must interpret attractions- animate and inanimate activities and events with reference to their context. According to Mancini (2001), a tour guide is a person who takes people on sightseeing tours of limited duration. Cohen (1985) insists that tour guides should display high level professional skill and intimate knowledge of local culture. Pond (1993) 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.

Cohen (1985) suggests that tour guides must "translate the strangeness of a foreign culture into a cultural idiom familiar to the visitors." According

to Erik Cohen tour guides have two important roles to play. One is the 'pathfinder' role. Guides act as 'path finder' who 'provides access to otherwise non-public territory.' The other role that tour guides must fill-in is that of 'mentors' or 'guru' to novice, adept, or seeker guiding tourist towards 'insight, enlightenment or any other exalted spiritual state'.

Cohen (1985) also identifies four major functions that tour guides perform- instrumental, social, interactionary, and communicative. Further, he identifies four types of tour guides who focus on each of these functions- *originals, animators, tour leaders* and *professionals*. Originals are pathfinders who perform primarily the instrumental function. They ensure that tourist reach their destination and return safely. They are also called path breakers because they select the route linking the attractions and make them accessible to the tourist. However, they restrict to providing elementary information about the attraction without offering any elaborate explanations. Animators perform the social function by interacting and socialising with tourists, being friendly, listening and respecting their preferences. Tour guides perform the interactionary function by facilitating interaction among tourists and with the environment. The last type, professionals, performs the communicative function, which involves transferring detailed information (e.g. telling and explaining to tourist where, when and why to look, how to behave) and interpreting attractions, sites and experiences (Reisinger and Steiner, 2006). Cohen (1985) claims Professionals are similar to mentors, but while the original role of the mentor was spiritual and intellectual guidance, the communicative function of the professional/ mentor tour guide has four components: (1) selection of the itinerary (what to see and experience- also what not to see); (2) dissemination of correct and precise information; (3) interpretation of what is seen and experienced;

and (4) fabrication, that is, presenting fake information as though it were genuine/ true.

An interesting observation by Cohen in the same work is that in newer destinations where tourist is an explorer guides assume roles of a pathfinder. However, as destinations mature role of a guide gradually evolve to shift from logistical aspects to that of a mentor who facilitates experience by interpreting culture and context as against translating in a limited sense. Urry (1990) suggest that tour guides have an important role to enable tourist to understand other culture. They encourage tourists to see, hear, smell, taste and feel other culture. Urry suggests that there is a shift away from the didactic legislator who instructs tourists where to look, what to look for, and when to look, towards an encouragement to look with interest at an enormous diversity of artefacts, cultures, and system of meaning with the help of an expert whose role it is to interpret the different elements for the visiting guests.

Pond (1993) in her book suggest that a tour guide is one who is a leader capable of assuming responsibility (*leader*); an educator to help the guest understand the places they visit (*educator*); an ambassador who extends hospitality and presents the destination in a way that makes visitors want to return (*host*); a host who can create a comfortable environment for the guest (*tour manager*); and a facilitator who knows how and when to fulfil the previous four roles (*facilitator*). Clearly, tour guides have a number of responsibilities as providers of tourism experiences, with sometimes competing roles in order to meet the needs of visitors, employers and host communities (Weiler and Ham, 2002).

Ap and Wong (2001) suggest that interpretive function of tour guide's role involve two dimensions- mediating and cultural broking. Tour guides' mediate between tourists and locals and the environment. Mediating moves beyond telling tourists how to think and feel about their experiences; it is about leading them to their own conclusions and facilitating them to learn. Mediation role of guides have different connotations. One way is to look at guides as mediators between hosts and guests; mediator between the tour operator/ travel agency and the tourists; mediator between the tourist and the local community and local scene; mediator between the accommodation sector and the tourist; mediator between the local business including transport and tourist; etc. Gurung, Simmons and Devlin (1996) also hold a similar opinion that tour guide is someone who builds bridges among different group of people through deployment of money, services, access and information.

Cultural broking is the act of bridging, linking or mediating between groups or persons of differing cultural backgrounds for the purpose of reducing conflict or producing change (Jezewski and Sotnik, 2001). Ap and Wong (2001) say tour guides, through their knowledge and understanding of a destination's attractions and culture and through their communication skills, transform tourists' visits from tours into experiences.

Gurung et al. (1996) also make a distinction between tour management and experience management. They appear to agree with the concept of different roles for tour guides as described by Pond (1993). They also suggest that a guide's role should involve both tour and experience management- the organisation of itinerary and selection and interpretation of sites in an interactive process with tourists. Thus, while on one hand tour guides serve as cultural brokers whose pivotal role is to shape the visitors' impressions and attitudes and help enhance their appreciation and understanding of their surroundings; on the other hand they serve as a buffer, insulating many tourists from the difficulties (and possibly some delights) of the visited culture.

However, mediation-model has been criticized. It is not possible to explain that guides serve to create harmony through mediation by keeping satisfied all parties involved. It may also be noted that such mediation is not altruistic. Mediation is a business model that includes networking, monopolizing contacts, operating a system tips and commissions, and satisfying tourists during service encounters to return a profit. Successful tour guides are entrepreneurs who turn their knowledge of content and market, and their interpersonal skills into sustainable businesses (Bras, 2000; Dahles, 1998; Dahles and Bras, 1999a, 1999b).

Another way of describing a tourist-visitor relationship is theatre approach. MacCannell suggested in 1973 that tourism spaces are organised around 'staged authenticity'. This was an approach similar to what Lovelock (1983) later popularized as service-theatre approach in service management literature. It has also been recognised that guides play an important role in the staging of these spaces- for a superior service encounter in real time, there have to be many back stage arrangements in place. They (guides) create value both 'front-stage' and 'back-stage' in response to a tourists' quest for authenticity and desired tourism experience. Urry (1990) also note that tour guides construct back stages in a contrived and artificial manner.

Greater the desired efficiency in staging of the experience, more organised the service provider needs to be. This results in to a packaged tour. Guided tours assure that tourists are channelled into the right place at the right time, doing so under the control of someone 'responsible'. To ensure efficiency, while authenticity of experience is attempted, deviations are checked, and as an extreme case there is minimal opportunity of interaction with the host community. This completes the whole circle and necessitates mediation by tour guides between the tourist and host community and context. The guides' intercessionary role in shepherding the group and explaining the attraction reduces the opportunity for interaction with the local community and the groups' attention becomes inwardly directed towards the guide rather than outwardly (Holloway, 1981).

Thus the main role of tour guides include telling (provision of information); selling (interactive communication that explains and clarifies); participating (being a part of activity); and delegating (giving responsibility to some future behaviour) (Howard, 1997).

Challenges before tour guides

Tour guides may be the most maligned people in the world of travel. They are blamed for the problems of travel, such as bad weather and traffic jams (Ang, 1990). Being present in person before a tourist they are expected to solve all problems of tourist- within or outside of their control. Ang (1990) 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. This is unjust as well as challenging.

There are very few studies about the professional status and issues faced by tour guiding profession that have been reported in the English-based literature (Holloway, 1981; Ap and Wong, 2001). Zhang and Chow (2004) have also reported that there have been very few research studies on tour guides (Almagor 1985; Cohen 1982, 1985; Fine and Speer, 1985; Katz, 1985; Pearce 1984). However, there have been comments and observations by a few researchers but not exactly while studying challenges faced by tour guides.

Chowdhary and Prakash (2010) based on their study of challenges faced by tour guides in India have identified at least 5 broad categories of challenges. These include general tourism environment; working conditions of tour guides; their relationships with local authorities; their relationship with trade intermediaries; and problems in handling tourists/ customers.

Cheong and Miller (2000), assert that travel agents, hoteliers, tour guides, and vendors constrain tourists' movements, behaviours, and even thoughts. The players not just constrain but enable and make tourism possible. While these players provide services and facilities to tourists, tourist adapts them to their own use (Brown, 2007). Thus all these service-providers contribute to customers' satisfaction or dissatisfaction, whereas tour guides often face the brunt.

Tour guides must address multiple stake holders simultaneously. Visitors expect that their safety and health will take a high priority, but at the same time expect an enjoyable and rewarding travel experience. Some have special needs and expectations associated with their particular cultural background, their physical and intellectual capabilities, and their passions and interests in particular subject matters (Weiler and Ham, 2002). Employers expect the guide to provide high-quality service to visitors in order to meet these expectations, as well as to manage the group, the itinerary and other logistical aspects of the experience to maximise not only visitor satisfaction but also profit margins (Cohen, 1985; Pond, 1993).

Tour guides face challenges both from within and outside of their operating context. Internally, guides may have personal limitations of skills, competences, etc. Externally, they must also subscribe to rules and regulations of their areas of operations, their employers and their clients. The guides are often pressed for time, caught between their obligation to please their employers and the tourists, and subject to government regulations (Dahles, 2002).

Governments at all levels have realised the importance of tourism as an intervention for achieving socio-economic-political goals. Governments, therefore, have gotten interested in controlling tourism to fall in line with their own agenda. In reference to tourism, this percolates down to controlling and modifying tour-guides' working and behaviour to meet its interests (like creating a positive image of destination, positive image of the government, etc.). However, there is an inherent dissonance between, intentions of governments and DMOs, interest of employers (tour companies), motivations of tour guides and expectations of tourists. However, a trend is visible. At destinations in 'growing' phase there appears to be more government control which gets reduced as competition at destination matures with significant participation of private players.

Interaction between the control regime and demand –supply equation of trained manpower also affects the working of tour guides. For example in India,

the demand-supply equation is very different for different regions. In northern regions the supply of tour guides appears to exceed the demand; whereas in other regions demand far exceeds the supply. Therefore, in northern region, guiding without a proper license is generally perceived as a threat to the state's carefully crafted image of tamed cultural diversity, professionalism promised uniformity, and central control- an observation also reported by Adam (1997) about early days of state control of tour guide licensing in Yogyakarta region of Indonesia. Here government regulations are considered as instrument for protectionism in the established industry. While it reduces opportunities for unlicensed guides to acquire professional status, it also provides for stricter control of the practices of licensed guides. On the other hand, in other tourism regions of India, tour guide training and licensing is considered an upgrading intervention that is perceived as an opportunity for practicing unlicensed guides as well as those who are new entrants to trade. This is similar to what Bras (2000) reported in case of Lombok.

Summarising their study on tour guiding in Hong Kong, Ap and Wong (2001), have identified that there was no training course for new entrants and there was a lack of training opportunities which resulted in to variable levels of professionalism, lack of recognition and a poor image of profession. Other challenges include potential problems resulting from unhealthy industry practices; need for a certification, registration or licensing system; absence of any monitoring of tour guide performance; and more active and visible role to be taken by the local tour guiding association.

Capacity building for tour guiding

Education and training are important for destinations for maintaining competitive advantage (White and Williams, 2000). Pond (1993) observes that training, evaluation and regulation of guides yields great rewards not only for travellers and guides but also for sites, cities and whole societies as well. Further Weiler and Ham (2002) recommend that for training to meet the needs of a country or region and contribute to sustainable development, the impetus for training must originate in the host country.

There have been different approaches to guide training and development. Broadly, they can be divided into two. According to Lugosi and Bray (2008) one approach considers guiding as a professional service and advocates for professionalization and certification for tour guides. This view is same as that opined by Mason and Christie (2003), and Black and Ham (2005). However, this view neglects the cultural context of a guide's learning. Ap and Wong (2001) and Zhang

and Chow (2004) recommend that licensing, coupled with formal training programmes, offer credible ways to improve guiding practices. While Zhang and Chow (2004) have recommended that professional and experienced guides should be included in training new guides, Ap and Wong (2004) suggest apprenticeship in companies as part of guide training.

The second approach to tour guide training is based in social scientific inquiry. Researchers belonging to this school (Holloway, 1981; Cohen, 1985; Fine and Speer, 1985; Katz, 1985; Cohen *et al*, 2002) focus on performance of tour guides, roles they assume and the experience of the guided tour that includes tourist-guide encounter. Pearce (1984) suggests to considers emotional, cognitive and environmental factors that shape a tourist-guide interaction, the tourist experience and subsequent perception of experience.

However, there is hardly any theoretical base as far as tour guiding is concerned (Howard, 1997). It is therefore recommended that best practices be benchmarked (Cherem, 1977; Ang 1990; Pond, 1993). Many authors have maintained that expert training be provided to tour guides so that they can meet professional standards and expectations of the travel companies and the tourists. Arreolo (1998) maintains based on roles that tour leaders are expected to play in group tour, and the skills and knowledge that operator expects, there is significant necessity for tour leader training. Cheram (1977) stresses the importance of the skills of delivery over actual knowledge when he claims that tour guides are interpreters first, and subject specialists second.

Weiler and Ham (2002) suggest that starting point for any type of capacity building, including tour guiding, is recognition of need by various in-country stakeholders like visitors, operators, host communities and managers of destinations and attractions. An important question is what should be the approach to content of these training? Cherem (1977) stresses the importance of skill of delivery over actual knowledge when he claims all guides are interpreters first, and subject specialists second. He recommends inputs in interpretive methods, field courses, research and theory. But Pond (1993) believes that guides need qualities like broad-based knowledge about the area that they are guiding within, enthusiasm, commitment to life long learning, empathy and sensitivity for people, flexibility, pride in servicing others and the 'ability to interpret by painting mental pictures'. She is of the opinion that many of these qualities can be developed through training. Knudson, Cable and Beck (1995) are of the opinion that effective interpretation is a result of experience gained over

time, along with careful study and continued training. They focus on effective speaking as the most important skill for tour interpretation-amiability, spontaneity, energy, confidence, delivery, and ability to organise- are some of the things that contribute. However, they opine that education alone can not develop all these traits though training will still be important.

It is now generally accepted that trainees with little or no experience as guides would require training on three important components: (1) expansion and refinement of product knowledge (e.g. history, culture, flora, fauna, geology, and site knowledge); (2) language training where required; and (3) interpretive guiding skills for managing tourist experiences and delivering high-quality interpretation (GreenCOM, 1999; Ham and Weiler, 1999). Pearce (1984) identifies that one of the difficulties of training guides lies in the balance between ensuring that a guide's talk is accurate, from an academic or scientific perspective, and not insisting that the guide give only a planned, well researched lecture to the tourists.

In developing countries, including India, inputs from different sources help develop the content for tour guide training programme. These include specific request from organisers which are mainly destination management organisations (private players in some cases); experiences of trainers and training organisations; and review of literature pertaining to tourism, guiding and other specific requirements like eco-tourism, adventure tourism, heritage walk, etc. (Cohen, 1985; Ham, 1992; Ham and Sutherland, 1992; Ham et al, 1995; Ham et al, 1993; Huszco, 1990; Kaye and Jacobson, 1995, Pond 1993, Rios, 1998; Weaver, 1998; Weiler and Davis, 1993). In some countries like Australia and Canada, industry bodies identify competency standards for competency-based interpretive tour guide training (CTHRC, 1996; TTA, 1999; Weiler, 1999).

In developing countries where state tends to control the supply of tourism, they (the state) also owe up the responsibility for supply of professionally trained tour guides. Different countries have different institutional mechanisms to handle guide training. In some cases it is handled directly by the ministry or its agencies, in others it could be the trade association, the approved institutions, or in some cases universities and colleges can offer this training independently. Different training agencies have developed training programmes depending upon what they view as an important role for tour guides. Accordingly, the content of training varies. The backgrounds of participants may also play an important role in the delivery of the programme,

that is, what kind of learning they have been used to (Chowdhary and Prakash, 2008).

Chowdhary and Prakash (2008) in their study used World Federation of Tourist Guide Association (WFTGA) framework for the analysis of the content of the tour guide training programme. In this frame work the deliverables are divided into four- practical guiding skills, applied knowledge (called sensitization by authors), cultural studies (called interpersonal/ behavioural skills) and business studies (called business/ management skills). Practical guiding skills included practical elements of guiding- variety of guiding scenarios, terminology, itinerary preparation etc. Applied knowledge (called sensitization) included building a philosophical premise for tourist guiding. This includes issues of concern for the host community, society and the nation. The third element cultural studies (called interpersonal/ behavioural skills for the study) are targeted at individual and group behaviour including addressing cross-cultural settings. Business/ management dimension includes a wide variety of issues those help in developing guiding as a business- both entrepreneurial and managerial inputs. Chowdhary and Prakash (2008) suggested adding two more dimensions increasing these to six. One additional element was knowledge of tourism products. This was especially important in cases where a guide's job was considered as that of information disseminator or educator. The last dimension was that of tourism context. This dimension intends to render a tourist guide more relevant vis-à-vis tourism context or supply chain. Does the programme include inputs about the various bodies and agencies in tourism sector?

Another important consideration is that the training courses that are developed must be based on learning outcomes and methods that were educationally sound and industry relevant. At the same time the existing competencies of the tour guides must be assessed and an estimate of learning needs must be prepared (Weiler and Ham, 2002). Researchers also advise to use a variety of training methods so that learners who are not able to learn from one teaching methods/ learning styles can benefit from other styles (Gardner, 1993; Gutloff, 1996).

As for the content, Cheram (1977) suggests that tour guide training should include courses in interpretive methods, as well as field courses, research and theory. As noted earlier, Pond (1993) recommends training for desired qualities like broad-based knowledge about the area they are guiding within, enthusiasm, commitment to life long learning, empathy and sensitivity for people, flexibility, pride in serving others and the 'ability to interpret by painting mental pictures.' Knudson et

al (1995) stress upon the oratory skills of the tour guides. They suggest skills required to be an effective speaker are amiability, enthusiasm, confidence, delivery and organisation. Chowdhary and Prakash (2008) suggest that tour guide training content should include- practical guiding skills; sensitisation for long term sustainability; interpersonal/ behavioural skills; managerial skills; knowledge of tourism products; and, awareness of tourism context.

Conclusion

Many researchers have maintained the primacy of tour guide for a tourists' experience. They have offered different explanations for what roles guides should play and how they should facilitate a tourist's experience. However, not all agree. Since tour guides are in a position to mediate as cultural brokers, tourists are exposed to interpretation by an individual. Consequently what tourists experience is subjective and replicated interpretations of their tour guides which in a sense are commoditised for mass consumption (McIntosh and Prentice, 1999). There is a fine divide between right interpretation of a cultural construct and glorified exaltation of cultural variable. Government supported tour guide training programmes often provide inputs and prepare guides for the later as if they are salespersons for the destination. Indonesian Government uses tourism strategically to address or promote issues of national significance and develop a desired national identity (Dahles, 2002). Formal guides are trained by the government to provide politically and ideologically correct narratives.

Importance of tour guides cannot be underestimated for quality tourism experience for tourists visiting a destination. As destinations compete it becomes increasingly important for tourism administrators and organisations to facilitate guides in carrying out their roles. This can be achieved by creating a work environment that helps guides perform. Superior quality of work life, pride in work, safe and secure jobs, good relationships with stake holders, and enjoying their jobs and professionalism are some of the issues those must be facilitated. Understandably, there has to be more communication amongst the stakeholders and greater appreciation of a guide's job (Chowdhary and Prakash, 2008b).

Further guides, in order to ensure a pleasant experience for the tourist, isolate them from the local environ and reduce opportunities for social interaction between the tourist and the host community. Therefore, the sense of place is conveyed formally rather than organically in guided tourism (McIntosh and Prentice, 1999). Gurung et al. (1996) also noted that while guides may isolate and protect tourists from harm, in the

process, they also cut them off from some delight of 'reality' and 'authentic' experience.

It is also pointed out that tour guide's narratives and interpretations may be biased because of their own agendas based on their socio-cultural, historical, political contexts or even because of their employment conditions (e.g. Ap and Wong, 2001). There is also a risk that a tour guide's interpretations are conformist narratives. They may also be self-serving. Many tour guides who represent tour companies are expected to guide tourists to particular merchandisers as their companies receive commissions from them.

In a study on informational effectiveness of tour guides at historical sites, Ryan and Dewar (1995) found a poor correlation between the interpreter's competency skills and information learnt by visitors. Malcolm-Davies (2004) have also reported similar outcome. He examined the extent to which costumed interpreters contributed to tourist's experiences at historic sites and reported that costumed interpreters have succeeded in providing an historical atmosphere and a sense of past but failed to provide enough learning. Researchers like Almagor (1985) suggest that guides are unsuccessful and redundant. There is evidence of technology replacing tour guides for narrative purposes. For example, Madhya Pradesh (MP) Tourism has tied up with telecom operator Airtel. A tourist may dial a designated number suffixed with code of a monument to listen to authentic narration about the monument. However, other roles that tour guides play are not addressed by this replacement. Almagor (1985) also reports of frictions between Tswana guides in Moremi Wildlife Reserve of Botswana and South African visitors who wanted them to play menial roles of assistants and servants as in the their home country.

The discussion in this paper raises a few issues. Does a tour guide 'really' enhance a tourists' experience? If yes, how far is it a commoditized product for popular consumption may be, far from being authentic? Another important issue is that is the locus of tourists' experience external to them or is it internal to them? That is, who controls the experience- the tour guide or do the tourist have enough freedom to shape their own experiences? How does the context of a tour guide affect his/ her performance and experience of the tourist? What challenges do tour guides face that may have a bearing on their informational effectiveness? What should the tourguides be trained for? What should be the role-image of a tour guide when competency building interventions are planned?

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