

DEVELOPMENT OF TOUR GUIDE COMPETENCIES IN IMPROVING WORK PROFESSIONALISM AT INDONESIAN TOURISM ASSOCIATION OF CENTRAL JAVA

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ABSTRACT

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Competency Development of Tourist Guides, Work Professionalism, HPI Central Java, Da'wah Values, Tourist Satisfaction.

This study aims to explore the competency development program of tour guides in improving work professionalism in HPI Central Java. The methods used were direct observation, and in-depth interviews with tourists, tour guides, and travel agencies, as well as literature studies. This research identifies factors that influence the improvement of competence and professionalism of tour guides. The main findings of this study indicate that a structured, sustainable, systematic tour guide competency development program, full support of stakeholders, and certification recognized by the state can contribute to improving the quality of tour guide services, and tourist satisfaction. The contribution of this research to the science of da'wah management can be seen from how da'wah values can be integrated in the tour guide competency development program to create tour guides who are not only competent in knowledge and skills, but also have ethical and moral awareness at work, such as a tour guide coordinating tourists to pray first before traveling, reminding prayer time schedules, and inviting to always do good, especially in terms of preserving the environment by throwing garbage in the trash that has been provided.

Kata Kunci:

Pengembangan Kompetensi Pemandu Wisata, Profesionalitas Kerja, HPI Jawa Tengah, Nilai-Nilai Dakwah, Kepuasan Wisatawan.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi program pengembangan kompetensi pemandu wisata dalam meningkatkan profesionalitas kerja di Himpunan Pramuwisata Indonesia (HPI) Jawa Tengah. Metode yang digunakan adalah observasi langsung, dan wawancara



mendalam dengan wisatawan, pemandu wisata, dan biro perjalanan wisata, serta studi literatur. Penelitian ini mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi peningkatan kompetensi, dan profesionalitas kerja pemandu wisata. Temuan utama penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa program pengembangan kompetensi pemandu wisata yang terstruktur, berkelanjutan, sistematis, dukungan penuh stakeholder, serta sertifikasi yang diakui oleh negara dapat berkontribusi terhadap peningkatan kualitas pelayanan pemandu wisata, dan kepuasan wisatawan. Kontribusi penelitian ini terhadap ilmu manajemen dakwah terlihat dari bagaimana nilai-nilai dakwah dapat diintegrasikan dalam program pengembangan kompetensi pemandu wisata untuk menciptakan pemandu wisata yang tidak hanya kompeten secara pengetahuan, dan keterampilan, tetapi juga memiliki kesadaran etika, dan moral dalam bekerja, seperti seorang pemandu wisata mengkoordinasikan wisatawan untuk berdo'a terlebih dahulu sebelum bepergian, mengingatkan jadwal waktu sholat, dan mengajak untuk selalu berbuat kebaikan, terutama dalam hal melestarikan lingkungan dengan membuang sampah ditempat sampah yang telah disediakan.

Introduction

Indonesia has enormous tourism potential, not only through its natural beauty and diverse cultures, but also through historical sites scattered throughout its territory (Mokodongan & Masjhoer, 2023). Central Java, as one of the provinces with leading tourist destinations, offers an extraordinary historical and cultural heritage (Iskandar et al., 2023). Starting from world historical heritage sites, namely Borobudur Temple and Prambanan Temple to the natural beauty of the Dieng Plateau and Karimun Jawa. These

destinations have a unique attraction to attract thousands or even hundreds of local and foreign tourists. Tourists in traveling are not only focused on tourist destinations, but also on memorable, educational, and satisfying experiences so they expect tour guides who are friendly, informative, and able to provide interesting explanations about history, culture, and local attractions (Crespi-Vallbona, 2021). Local guides make efforts to preserve culinary arts by building local branding to encourage the government for culinary tourism and creating the concept of culinary tourism as local cultural tourism (Pramezwarly et al., 2022).

Tourism has evolved into an experiential industry, where each tourist visit connects the expectations and abstract images of potential travelers with the reality of the destinations they visit (Meacci & Liberatore, 2018). In such visits, tourists need more than just beautiful scenery. They need in-depth information about the conditions, history, culture, and various interesting content to better understand and appreciate the uniqueness of the destination. Therefore, effective interpretation of tourist destinations is one of the determinants of the success of this experience-based industry (J. Wang et al., 2021). Interpretation in tourist destinations is generally divided into two categories: guided and unguided (Alazaizeh et al., 2019). Guided interpretation is done through direct communication between guides and tourists, whether in the form of face-to-face interaction, audio-visual, or group tours. In contrast, unguided interpretation uses non-personal information such as information boards, symbols, signs, and cues that do not involve direct contact with the tour guide (Roberts et al., 2014). In the context of modern tourism, guided interpretation services have become one of the main functions of the tour guiding profession and an essential part of a memorable travel experience (Huang et al., 2014).

Since tourism began to be recognized, tour guides have played an important role as guardians and guides, ensuring that tourists' journeys are safe, comfortable, and enjoyable (Ren et al., 2023). However, along with the increasingly complex needs of tourists, the role of tour guides is also evolving. They do not only serve as signposts (Teng, H.-Y., & Tsaur, 2022) but also as travel managers, companions, translators, and liaisons between various stakeholders in the tourism industry, such as vendors, and travel agencies (Caber et al., 2018). The complexity of these roles makes tour guides a key actor who plays an important role in creating quality tourism experiences while supporting destination development (González-Rodríguez et al., 2020). Competent tour guides can increase traveler satisfaction and strengthen their loyalty to the destination, thus contributing to sustainable tourism (Moon & Han, 2019).

Tour guides are the vital link between destination owners and visitors. They are the frontline who are largely responsible for the overall impression and satisfaction of the tourism services offered by a destination (Agyeman & Antwi-Bosiako, 2022; Banerjee & Chua, 2020). For example, it was found that tour guide performance is a critical component of tourism success, while (Al-Okaily, 2022; Anđelković et al., 2022; Mossberg, 1995) observed that tour guides are considered an important component in choosing a charter tour. Although there are various definitions of tour guides, the International Tour Managers Association and the European Federation of Tourist Guides Associations (EFTGA) have created an internationally recognized definition that a tour guide is a person who guides groups or individuals from abroad or from the home country around monuments, sites, and museums in a city or region to interpret the cultural, natural, and environmental heritage in an inspiring and entertaining way (Navalón-García & Mínguez, 2021) (Grančay,

2020) (EFTGA, 1998).

Tour guides have a very unique position. They are an integral aspect of the supply-side component in terms of organization. They can work for supply-side stakeholders in every area of the tourism-related industry. Tour guides are usually regarded as service providers to tourists, regardless of the company they work for (F. Lu et al., 2020) (Alazaizeh et al., 2019; Fu et al., 2021). Tour guides can also help the growth of sustainable tourism by reducing the *negative* impacts of tourism activities, supporting local businesses, adhering to customs, and encouraging tourists to comply with existing rules (Alazaizeh et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2023). Tour guides have an important role in providing information, quality services, and making the tourist experience interesting, as tour guides, and tourism ambassadors who introduce tourist destinations well (Hansen & Mossberg, 2017). The role of tour guides in the tourism industry is often referred to as "A country's ambassador to the visitor" or in other words, tour guides act as ambassadors of the nation (Mulyana & Chandra Lesmana, 2021).

Tour guides have a strategic role as cultural mediators as they serve to introduce and bridge the differences between local and tourist cultures (Feldman & Skinner, 2018). Through direct interaction, tour guides provide information about local culture to shape tourists' perceptions and attitudes towards their own culture and other cultures encountered (Shi et al., 2023). Thus, tour guides are not only responsible for conveying information, but also instilling a sense of tolerance, cross-cultural understanding, and a significant travel experience (Ormond & Vietti, 2022). Tour guides play an important role in ensuring that there is no exploitation or discrimination of either local people or tourists. They explain the social and cultural rules for tourists to be more polite and respectful of the local community (Liljeblad,

2020).

The emotional intelligence of tour guides greatly influences their performance, especially in helping to work proactively and behave positively outside of their main duties (Al-Okaily et al., 2024). The performance of tour guides is influenced by *soft skills* and *hard skills*, such as the ability to communicate, manage time and tasks, and lead a team (Suryana, 2022) (Banerjee & Chua, 2020). These skills play an important role in providing satisfactory services, creating a positive experience for tourists, influencing their attitude during the trip, and increasing the likelihood of tourists wanting to return in the future (Syakier & Hanafiah, 2022).

However, there are some challenges in developing tour guide competencies. Often, tour guides still have limitations in terms of competence as most of them do not have adequate access to professional training and continuous competency improvement programs (Galí, 2022; Podsukhina et al., 2022). In addition, tour guides in Central Java, especially those who are members of the Indonesian Guides Association (HPI) Central Java, also face various obstacles that are quite complex to improve their competence (Darwati & Manika, 2020). One of the main obstacles is time constraints due to their busy schedules, making it difficult to attend training programs regularly. On the other hand, the high cost of training is also a significant obstacle, especially for guides who work independently or do not receive support from related organizations (Caber et al., 2019). This condition further complicates the process of competency improvement, making it difficult for them to keep up with the ever-changing and dynamic development of tourism. The ability of tour guides to understand tourists' expectations and provide quality services is critical to the success of the tourism sector (Park & Jeong, 2019). Good service not only affects the level

of tourist satisfaction but also plays a role in shaping a positive image of tourist destinations. When tourists are satisfied and have a memorable experience, they are more likely to recommend the destination to others, which ultimately helps increase visitation and supports the sustainability of the tourism industry (M. et al., 2020). Therefore, developing the competence of tour guides is very important in improving work professionalism and the quality of services provided.

Competency development for tour guides includes effective communication skills, including the ability to manage gestures, eye contact, body language, vocabulary choices, articulation, voice volume, and intonation. Good listening skills and mastery of foreign languages are also very important, especially in providing satisfactory service to foreign tourists (Mulyana & Chandra Lesmana, 2021). Good communication not only makes it easier to convey information but also creates positive interactions and helps build harmonious relationships with tourists (Arny Irhani Asmin, 2022). In addition to communication skills, a tour guide must have in-depth knowledge of the tourist destination, including history, culture, and local specialties, to be able to provide accurate and relevant information (Kul et al., 2024). They must also adhere to a professional code of ethics and meet established service standards so as to maintain professionalism and the trust of tourists. To ensure such competence, tour guides must have a guide license and certificate that is officially recognized by the state, as proof that they meet the qualifications needed in the tourism industry (Waskito et al., 2016).

A tour guide competency development program, if based on appropriate theory and research, can effectively enhance the tourist experience by changing the role of the tour guide from a one-way explanation giver to someone who interacts as an intermediary (Weiler & Walker, 2014). Tour

guides do not only provide information, they also shape the atmosphere that allows tourists to feel and understand the culture or environment of a destination (Kapa et al., 2022). To achieve this, a critical tour guide competency development model should focus on instilling principles, values, attitudes, and mindsets relevant to their work as tour guides (Al-Okaily, 2022).

This research has contributed to the influence of competency development on the professionalism of tour guides, identifying the main competencies needed to improve their work professionalism, analyzing the long-term impact of training programs on tour guides' careers, and tourism quality can be further elaborated. Previous research on increasing the competence of tour guides has focused more on local tour guides and increasing their competence has not been running optimally. Some articles that discuss increasing the competence of tour guides include (Pakpahan & Purba, 2024), (Aprilliani et al., 2022), (PUKSI et al., 2021), (Edi Novra, Riko Riyanda, 2024), (Prasetyo et al., 2021). Some gaps have not been filled in this research, especially in technical field studies, such as the absence of supervision of tour guides who have just participated in the competency development program.

Methods

The data collection methods in this study used interviews, observations, and literature review. Interviews were conducted with tour guides to gain an understanding of their experience in attending training, competency development, and its impact on work professionalism. In addition to interviewing tour guides, interviews were also conducted with tourists and travel agencies to find out the competencies needed by a tour guide to

improve work professionalism after seeing the tour guide's work experience firsthand. Observation is carried out by means of researchers directly involved in participating in activities as a tour guide so that they can directly observe the performance of tour guides. The literature review in this study was conducted by analyzing relevant literature including books, scientific journals, and research reports related to the development of tour guide competencies, work professionalism, and service quality in the tourism industry. This literature review aims to understand the basic concepts, theories, and results of previous studies, as well as to identify research gaps that have not been widely discussed.

The data analysis technique in this research uses data triangulation. Data triangulation is a technique to increase the validity and reliability of research results by comparing data obtained from various sources or methods (interviews, observations, and literature review). The data was obtained from various parties, namely tour guides, tourists, and travel agencies.

Results

Evaluation of the Tourist Guide Competency Development Program: Challenges, Solutions, and Long-term Impacts

This research was obtained from data collection and analysis which will be described in depth. This research focuses on exploring how the development of tour guide competencies in the Central Java Guides Association can contribute to improving the professionalism of tour guide work, including tour guide careers. The findings were obtained through direct observation in the field and in-depth interviews with tour guides, administrators of the Central Java Guides Association, and other relevant parties. The resulting findings not only show the reality in the field but also

provide new knowledge about the factors that influence the improvement of tour guide competence in the modern tourism era. The reality in the field shows that tour guides still have limitations in terms of competence. This occurs because there are tour guides who lack communication skills, mastery of foreign languages, in-depth knowledge of tourist destinations, how to interact with tourists, not in accordance with the professional code of ethics, do not have a license or guide certificate recognized by the state (Albrecht et al., 2021). Tour guides often face various obstacles in improving their competence. Some of these include limited access to professional training, lack of time to attend ongoing competency development training programs, and high training costs. As a result, many tour guides find it difficult to develop the competencies needed to keep up with tourism developments and provide quality services according to tourism industry standards (Fu et al., 2021). Therefore, tour guide competency development programs must be carried out in a structured and planned manner, tailored to the needs and skills that still need to be improved (Weiler & Walker, 2014). Thus, the program can assist tour guides in achieving a common understanding of work professionalism standards and service quality.

This study also found that the development of tour guide competencies has a significant effect on increasing work professionalism, including tour guide careers. Tour guides who have participated in competency development programs have improved the quality of service to tourists. This makes tourists feel satisfied with the experience they get and appreciate the services provided. As a result, excellent service, zero complaints, and repeat orders are created. In fact, satisfied tourists have the potential to invite others to visit and use the same tour guide services (Hwang et al., 2023). In addition, direct experience in tourist destinations has a significant impact on

understanding the needs and expectations of tourists. By understanding these expectations, tour guides will be better prepared to provide excellent service and shape the image of tourist destinations (Jordanova & Styliadis, 2019). Tour guides who have communication skills with friendliness, responsiveness, and a positive professional attitude can influence relationships with tourists to increase tourist satisfaction, provide memorable travel experiences, and promote tourist destinations by word of mouth (Hwang & Lee, 2018). This encourages tourists to feel loyal, have a desire to visit again and recommend the destination to others because the service they receive has met their initial expectations (Solís-Radilla et al., 2019).

In order to improve their competence and professionalism, tour guides need to focus on several key aspects. First, they should continuously deepen their knowledge of local culture, history, and tourist attractions to provide accurate and interesting information. In addition, the development of effective communication skills is essential to interact with different types of travelers in a friendly and professional manner, coupled with foreign language proficiency as a plus. Guides also need to hone their management and problem-solving skills to deal with unexpected situations that may occur during the trip. Finally, the use of technology, such as mobile applications to provide real-time information, can improve the efficiency and professionalism of tour guides. By focusing on these aspects, tour guides will be able to provide a satisfying experience for tourists.

The results of this study indicate that a tour guide competency development program that is carried out consistently, structured, systematic, and sustainable has a significant effect on improving the professionalism of tour guides, including tour guide careers. Tour guides who have participated in the program have shown improvements in their tour guide careers, as well

as various aspects of professionalism, such as the ability to manage time effectively, convey accurate and relevant information, and maintain discipline and a sense of responsibility in every task undertaken. In addition, their professional attitude is reflected in better communication skills, especially in dealing with tourists from various cultural backgrounds, and a deep understanding of a tourist destination (Kul et al., 2024). Tour guides are also increasingly able to apply the professional code of ethics well, show high commitment to work, and have conflict management skills and the ability to solve problems in the field quickly and accurately. In addition, their ability to adapt to the needs of tourists and diverse tourist expectations is increasing, so as to create a comfortable and pleasant travel atmosphere (Mohammed, 2021).

The competency development program is also influential in changing the view of a tour guide's career from a temporary job to a promising profession. In addition, this competency development program can open up opportunities for self-development, such as becoming a tour manager, where the tour manager is responsible for the planning and implementation of the tour. In addition, tour guides can become tourism consultants, providing advice and strategies to *travel agents* or tourist destinations on how to improve tourist services and attractions (Runtunuwu et al., 2019).

The impact of this competency development program is not only limited to increasing knowledge, and skills, but also contributes to the welfare of tour guides (Mak, 2019). Tourist guides with better knowledge and skills can provide a more satisfactory quality of service for tourists, thus increasing their income through bigger tips or better job opportunities. The sustainability of the tour guide profession in the midst of increasingly fierce competition in the tourism industry makes tour guides more competitive in the job market.

The tourism industry not only requires competent tour guides but also adaptive to changes and new challenges (Streimikiene et al., 2021).

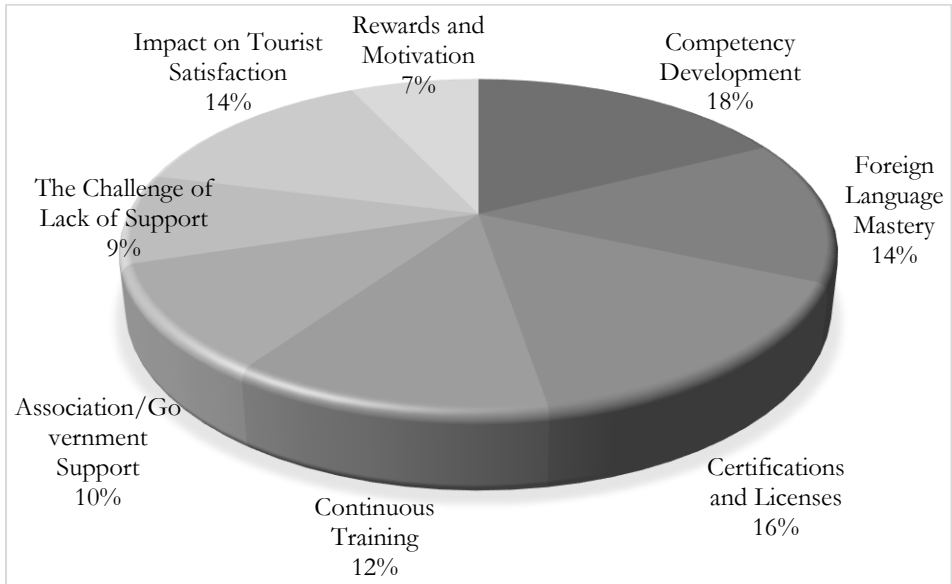
Tourism quality is often measured by the level of tourist satisfaction in visiting a tourist destination. This satisfaction is not only related to natural beauty or cultural uniqueness, but is also strongly influenced by the experience of tourist interactions with tour guides who have a significant role in creating a memorable tourist experience (Irimiás et al., 2021). This study shows that tour guide competency development programs have a positive effect on the tourist experience, such as trained tour guides are able to bring historical stories to life with emotionally evocative narratives, or convey information in an interesting, and in-depth way, thus providing educational and emotional value for tourists (Guan & Huan, 2019).

Positive experiences provided by competent tour guides can increase tourist satisfaction and loyalty. Tourists who are satisfied with the quality of tour guide services are likely to return, as well as recommend the destination to others. This helps to create a positive image of the tourist destination, which in turn has an impact on increasing overall tourist visits (Cheunkamon et al., 2022).

Figure 1 explains the interview analysis that competency development is considered very important by all respondents, with 100% of respondents agreeing. In addition, 80% of respondents emphasized the importance of foreign language acquisition, while 90% stated that certifications and licenses are necessary to demonstrate professionalism. Continuous training was also recognized by 70% of respondents as an important aspect, and 60% highlighted the need for support from associations or the government. However, 50% of respondents noted the challenges that arise due to lack of support. On the other hand, 80% of respondents perceived a positive impact

of competency development on traveler satisfaction, although only 40% emphasized the importance of rewards as motivation to improve performance.

Figure 1. Tourist Guide Competency Development Program



Competency development programs that are specifically designed, structured, consistent, and sustainable have proven effective in improving the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of tour guides. This competency improvement includes not only in-depth knowledge of a tourist destination, but also responsibility, communication skills, integrity, possession of guiding certifications and licenses, time management, ability to serve tourists, adherence to a code of ethics, and mastery of foreign languages (Prasetyo et al., 2021). The higher the competence of a tour guide, the better the quality of service provided to tourists so as to create tourist satisfaction, a more positive and satisfying experience. In addition, it also has a positive impact on the image of tourism. The tour guide competency development program must also be supported by various parties, such as the Central Java Tour

Guide Association, government agencies, and the private sector so that it can be carried out consistently and systematically every year. This support aims to create a conducive work environment for improving the competence and professionalism of tour guides so as to produce qualified and competent tour guides and be able to keep up with the development of the tourism industry. Competent and outstanding tour guides need to be given awards as a form of appreciation and motivation to continue to improve their competence and professionalism (Jiang et al., 2023). Thus, they will be more enthusiastic in providing the best service to visiting tourists.

Discussion

Efforts of the Central Java Tour Guide Association in Developing Tour Guide Competencies

The Central Java Tourist Association is an organization that focuses on developing the competence of tour guides in the Central Java region. The organization aims to improve the quality of tour guide services through continuous training and education. By prioritizing professionalism, members of the association are equipped with in-depth knowledge of local culture, history, and tourism potential, so as to provide an interesting and educational experience for tourists.

In an effort to achieve its vision and mission, the Central Java Guides Association also collaborates with various parties, including local government and the private sector, to create relevant and innovative programs. Active participation in seminars, workshops, and tourism promotion activities is an integral part of this competency development. Thus, it is expected that tour guides can adapt to the ever-changing development of the tourism industry and be able to compete at the national and international levels.

The Central Java Association of Guides equips its members with various essential skills to become competent tour guides, including knowledge of local culture and history, effective communication, state-recognized certification, group and time management, training on professional work ethics and integrity in carrying out guiding duties, training on the use of technology and digital media, and interpersonal skills to build good relationships with tourists. In addition, members are also trained in team management, handling problems that may arise during the trip, as well as knowledge of the environment and sustainability in tourism. Foreign language skills, especially English, are also strengthened so that guides can communicate with foreign tourists (L. Lu et al., 2021). With this training, the members are expected to provide high-quality services and an interesting experience for tourists.

In the Central Java Guides Association, the results of developing the competence of tour guides showed positive developments, where members who participated in the program experienced significant improvements in knowledge of tourist destinations, mastery of foreign languages, verbal and non-verbal communication skills, group and time management, use of technology and digital media, and interpersonal skills. (Ramadhani, 2021). This makes them more competent in guiding tourists and able to create memorable experiences. However, challenges such as limited resources, lack of support from the government, and financial constraints are still an obstacle in implementing tour guide competency development programs. To overcome this, intensive cooperation is needed between the Association of Indonesian Guides (HPI) Central Java, government agencies, and the private sector. The support can be in the form of increasing the training budget, providing wider access to competency improvement programs, and

cooperation facilities with the tourism industry (Achmad et al., 2023). Thus, more optimal training can be carried out so that the professionalism of tour guides is growing and able to support sustainable tourism growth in Central Java (Ariyani & Fauzi, 2023). This collaboration also ensures that tour guides can develop better communication skills and cultural understanding, as these two aspects are crucial in providing quality services (Navalón-García & Mínguez, 2021).

The Importance of Tour Guide Competence in the Tourism Industry

In an increasingly developing and dynamic tourism industry, tour guides require various competencies as support in providing quality service, tourist satisfaction, and a quality travel experience to tourists (Kapa et al., 2022). These competencies include current trends, mandatory competencies, and minimum competencies that must be possessed.

Recent trends in tour guide competencies include digital literacy, the ability of tour guides to provide information about a tourist destination and directions through digital applications and social media. Knowledge of sustainable tourism and the ability to implement practices that are environmentally friendly and support local communities such as clean water management, waste management, preserving cultural heritage and local traditions, reducing waste of any type, minimizing air, water, and soil pollution, and creating business opportunities for local communities, such as handicrafts, cultural performances, and local culinary (Hamid et al., 2021).

Mandatory competencies in the competence of tour guides with the importance of improving communication skills, both verbally and non-verbally because these skills play an important role in creating memorable experiences and memories for tourists in a tourist destination (Hakim & Adeni, 2022). Effective communication not only helps tour guides convey information clearly, but also build

emotional connections with tourists. In addition, communication skills and soft skills, such as empathy, cooperation, and conflict management have a positive impact on customer satisfaction in the tourism sector (Čuić Tanković et al., 2023). This not only improves the quality of service, but also supports the career development of tour guides and strengthens work professionalism (Trivenna & Eviana, 2024).

Tour guides can convey information in an engaging and relevant way as they act as translators, storytellers and cross-cultural communicators. An enjoyable interactive experience can increase customer satisfaction and improve their impression of the location, making these skills essential (Saraiva & Anjos, 2019).

Tour guides should also have good cultural competence, especially effective communication skills and a sense of calling in carrying out their profession, will be able to significantly affect tourist satisfaction and loyalty (Shi et al., 2023). These competencies not only make it easier for tour guides to convey information in a clear and engaging manner, but also help to create a more personalized and in-depth relationship with tourists (Bostan, Zahra, Majdi, Ali Akbar, Honari, Habib, Karaoubi, Mehdi, Nikjoo, 2021). When tour guides are able to interpret local culture in an interesting and understandable way, tourists will feel emotionally engaged, thus enhancing their travel experience (Kang & Song, 2021).

The ability to manage groups of tourists of various sizes and ensure all participants feel safe and entertained requires a combination of communication skills, security knowledge, time management, mastery of information about the history, culture, geography, and main attractions of the tourist destination being guided, mastery of foreign languages if there are foreign tourists, and creativity in entertainment. A competent tour guide can integrate all these aspects to provide quality services and a pleasant,

memorable, educational, and unforgettable travel experience for all tourists (Al-Okaily, 2022).

Minimum competencies for tour guides include basic knowledge of a tourist destination, including key attractions and relevant general information. The tour guide should be able to provide explanations about the history, culinary tours, and facilities in the destination. This competency should be supported by clear and friendly communication skills with tourists. Before starting their guiding duties, tour guides need to ensure that they are physically fit for the task, such as walking for long periods and lifting luggage if necessary. In addition, tour guides must have good time management skills to ensure the itinerary goes according to plan (Hansen & Mossberg, 2017).

The Effect of Service Quality on Tourist Satisfaction in the Success of Tourism Destinations

Tour guide training plays an important role in the development of professionalism in the tourism industry, especially in Central Java through the Indonesian Tour Guide Association (HPI) Central Java. Research shows that structured and sustainable training contributes to improving the knowledge and skills of tour guides, especially in the aspects of communication, understanding of local culture and knowledge, and conflict management skills (Edi Novra, Riko Riyanda, 2024). Tour guides who have received training tend to be more confident and better prepared to deal with various situations in the field so that they can provide quality services that increase tourist satisfaction.

Tour guide services are an important part of traveler satisfaction. Tour guides not only serve as representatives or ambassadors of the destination, but also help tourists have a better experience (Hwang & Lee, 2018). As the

first person to directly interact with tourists, they ensure tourists' comfort, solve problems, and provide information about places of interest (Tsaur & Teng, 2017). Tour guides not only help tourists meet their physical and spiritual needs, but also help tourists understand local values by interpreting their culture, helping people communicate with each other, and contextualizing information to help tourists understand local values (Mohamad Jumail, SST. Par, 2017). In addition, by tracking and supervising visitor behavior, tour guides help preserve the environment.

The quality of service provided by tour guides is very important to encourage tourists to support the tour guide profession and reduce the stigma or negative assessment of the profession because direct interaction with tour guides can change their perspective on the world, this benefit is more pronounced in tourists who lack empathy (Banerjee & Chua, 2020). Tour guides who bring positive energy and share knowledge through interesting stories also contribute to improving tourists' sustainable behavior, especially during visits to tourist destinations (Xie et al., 2023). Tour guides continue to play an important role in developing tourism by providing high-quality information and services. This is true amidst various challenges, such as geopolitical tensions in some regions (Aloudat, 2017).

In addition, the quality of service provided by tour guides also significantly affects the level of tourist satisfaction with a positive asymmetrical direction of influence. This means that the higher the quality of service received, the greater the tourist satisfaction, but if the quality of service decreases, the negative impact can be more pronounced (Kuo et al., 2018). Conversely, a lack of destination knowledge or an inability to solve problems can have an adverse impact on traveler satisfaction (Stone & Sthapit, 2024). Therefore, tour guides should have adequate knowledge and

good problem-solving skills in order to handle unexpected situations and meet tourists' expectations.

Tourist satisfaction is very important for the tourism sector because it serves as a key indicator of destination performance and distinguishes one destination from another. Satisfied tourists tend to behave well in the future, such as visiting again, giving word-of-mouth recommendations, or telling others about the goods and services in the place (Sarraf et al., 2015). Therefore, maintaining and improving customer satisfaction is key to the sustainability and success of a tourist destination. In addition, various stakeholders, including the tourism industry, local communities, and local governments benefit financially from this satisfaction (D. Y. Wang, 2016).

Tourist satisfaction is strongly influenced by good problem-solving ability, cultural knowledge, and communication skills, according to empirical research. Compared with factors related to internal management, good service from tour guides as the main actors has a greater impact on tourist satisfaction (Ninpradith et al., 2019).

Building Motivation, and Professionalism of Tourist Guides

One contribution that has not been highlighted much is the effort to build the motivation and professionalism of tour guides. The motivation of tour guides can be improved through various strategies, such as the provision of awards, and incentives, such as trophies, further certification, financial bonuses, and public recognition of hard work to outstanding tour guides (Delavallade, 2021).

This approach has a positive impact as a source of motivation by encouraging tour guides to continuously improve competencies, attend additional training, pursue higher career paths such as becoming tour

managers or tourism consultants, and acquire new skills (Albrecht et al., 2021).

The professionalism of tour guides can be improved through various strategies, such as establishing worker operational standards (SOPs), developing certification programs such as the EcoGuide program in Australia can help improve the standards and performance of tour guides (Black & Ham, 2005) improving professional skills through targeted training such as foreign language acquisition, tour management, or advanced courses in communication (Hwang & Lee, 2018).

This not only improves the quality of service provided but also enriches overall knowledge and skills. Outstanding tour guides serve as role models for their peers, foster a competitive work environment, and motivate each other to achieve higher and continue to grow (Hu et al., 2024).

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research conducted, it can be concluded that the competency development of tour guides plays an important role in improving their professionalism. Programs designed in a structured, consistent, and sustainable manner are proven to be effective in improving knowledge, skills, and attitudes covering aspects such as destination mastery, communication, integrity, and foreign language skills. Higher competence in tour guides directly contributes to improved service quality, which has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction and tourism image. Support from various parties is needed to ensure the sustainability of this program, and the provision of awards can motivate tour guides to continue improving their performance.

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