

# SERVICE QUALITY OF TOUR GUIDES IN SELECTED TOUR OPERATORS IN NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION AND REGION IV-A

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**Abstract:** The tourism industry is wide service industry, it involves many service-oriented groups of people for it to operate functionally. One of these service-oriented group of people is the tour guides, which play a huge role in the tourism industry since they provide the tourist with a much clearer and bigger picture of a destination and its services. This study examines the factors that affects the service quality of tour guides. This study can fill in gaps for research about effectiveness of tour guides that is not just based on the customer's point of view but also to the tour guides themselves. SERVQUAL method five dimensions; reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness, was used to examine the tour guides' challenges encountered during a tour. This is a qualitative study wherein purposive sampling was used to determine respondents and data was collected through semi-structured interview. After conducting interviews, the findings suggest that most of the challenges encounter by the guides are language barrier, safety and security of the tourists, lack of guest profiling, cultural differences and failure of guides to provide the promised service. In conclusion, tour guides should focus on their professional competence skill, enhancement of knowledge of the destination and its culture. Guides must be trained with an emphasis on serving clients well.

**Keywords:** Content Analysis, SERVQUAL, tour guide, tour operations.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Even if it is a group of people, duo or solo, a person has a desire to travel. By travelling, they can go from one place to another, discover each place that is yet to be appreciated and realize that people can escape in their reality, in their daily routine and rest from all the worries that they think about in an ordinary day. People in this technology and media-exposed generation would be fond of dreaming to go into places that they looked-up in the internet, search for it and achieve their goal of reaching that destination with the help of the people who works in the Tourism industry such as travel agents and tour operators that will help them create their itineraries and attend to their needs before arriving in their target destination. Upon arriving in the place, this is where a traveler's journey to an unfamiliar location starts. They don't know what to do, where to go and how to survive or cope-up in interacting with some locals if they need some help, especially to the people who chose to travel solo. This is where a person needs to accompany them, in order to assist the travelers and give some notable information about the place they were into. They are called tour guides. Tour guides lead a group of people, guests from overseas or from the resident country around monuments, sites and museums of a city or district; to make the guests understand in a motivating and humorous manner, in the language of the guests' choice, the cultural, natural heritage and environment (European Federation of Tourist Guide Association, 2014 cited in Weiler, Black, 2015)[1]. Being a tour guide has been one of the most interesting job choices in the field of Tourism industry because a person is challenged to develop the exceptional skills they need to possess. Aside from having excellent communication skills like most of the Tourism industry jobs requires, this job requires you to have a good memory and

should be able to keep the participants listening to you. Tour guiding is not just about talking in front with loads of people, but it involves leadership skills and selling the history, stories and the information you wanted to share with them in a specific thing, place, and a person.

The proponents selected this theme because the researchers desire to distinguish different views of different tourists as they experience the service of the tour guides and examine their performance based on their skills according to five indicators called RATER, based on the SERVQUAL model concept by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988)[2]. In all travelling situations, the participants of a tour can be less cooperative in engaging or listening to the guide's stories and activities. However, the participants' goal in attending a tour is to see the attraction itself and know about that place. It is also their role to deal and participate themselves with the guide to be kept informed and to learn new knowledge. The participants play a big role in determining the performance of tour guides. The portrayal of the tour guides' role influences the tourist's behavior during the actual tour. For example, tour guides are described that the need of a participant for good service was a main factor for tipping or on the other hand, the participants can have lot of complaints for the guide because they insufficient in communication competence, because the participants did not receive help or having lacked in individual contact and the guide's irascible behavior (Weiler, Black, 2015)[1].

This study can be used to have a close look on improving ones' performance that can give their participant's desired satisfaction. This emerging theme of study is somehow relevant to research today because people have a perception in tour guides as a low-profile job in the tourism hospitality industry. This paper can make them recognize that being a tour guide is something more than other tourism-related jobs as they are the front-liners of the tourism industry (Damo, 2015)[3]. This study will verify specific complications or issues that are existing in their service and propose a service quality program for guides to improve the participants' response. This will help the proponents to understand the perception of the participants in a tour. The analysis presented in this paper will also help future researchers to create innovative ideas in evaluating tour guides as they make this study one of their references. The research is distinctive because it's seldom that undergraduate researchers tackle studies about the tour guides. It brings more knowledge about tour guides; their different practices and it may also serve the future researchers who want to study about the said topic. This paper would fill in some gaps by previous researches related to this theme of study, like applying SERVQUAL model in a study but will generate shorter questionnaires than using the 22-item tool in 2 parts. Rather than using the original 10 dimensions of the model namely Competence, Courtesy, Credibility, Security, Access, Communication, Knowing the customer, Tangibles, Reliability, and Responsiveness, the proponents will use the latest one with RATER as the main indicators. Also, according to a study of Bowie and Chang (2008)[5], they used participant observation; conducting interviews as their main tool for gathering data of only one tour to assess the tour guides that eventually can influence tourist satisfaction, the results of this may have limited generalization; unlike when using survey questionnaires which will be conducted by the researchers in this study, they can determine the assessment for the tour guides in the chosen company easily by analyzing the data after the results is statistically treated.

SERVQUAL (Service Quality) model is widely used theory intended for evaluating customer insights of service quality in service and merchandizing companies. The proponents chose this concept model because they can use this to recognize the service insights of clients and the outcome should be improving the services that a company or organization offer. This concept design also focuses on looking to its five indicators, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy and Tangibles and is likewise is intended to be applicable through a wide range of services and this concept pursues service quality trends and pursues to follow service quality trends. (Parasuraman, et. al, 1988, cited in Weiler, Black, 2015)[1] Example of a service quality trend is "Personalization". It establishes an improved customer experience because of technology. Technology made everything easier to follow client's preferences and previous transactions. So today, there is no purpose not to make more personalized experience that provides the needs of the customers (Hyken, 2017)[2]. Tangible is the physical appearance of personnel, working equipment, facilities and communication materials. Reliability is the capability to be able to give the promised service correctly. Responsiveness is the willingness of a guide to lend a hand to customers and provide services. Assurance is the knowledge of employees and capability to give assurance and Empathy is the ability to be a caring employee and giving tourists personal, individual attention ("Understanding the SERVQUAL model", 2013)[4]

This research conducted by the proponents will have a vision of the tour guides' challenges in guiding groups, that was based on the SERVQUAL concept that has not used by a study that measured their effectiveness. In a study by Go, Caspe and Mijares (2015)[7], instead of relating the study using Reliability, Assurance, Tangibility, Empathy and Responsiveness, they based their observation through assessing different skills of the guide namely Leadership skills,

communication skills, interpretation skills, time management skills, visitor management skills, image and personality, and knowledge skills. This study also focused more on getting the perspective of the tour guides instead of the guests, making us informed about how does their daily tasks tests and affects their performance. The proponents of the study “Effectiveness of Tour Guides in Manila: Input for a Proposed Training Program” stated that they have conducted the research for tour guides that is working for different museums, as well as freelance guides while this study focused on tour guides that works for tour operators that handle group tours and such.

EMC One Tours Ltd. is a Region IV-A based travel agency and tour operator managed by Mr. Michael Roxas that serves domestic and international flights, hotel accommodations and local and tour packages. They are also a member of Philippine Tour Operators Association, well-known to cater tours for school and universities.

Baron Travel Corporation is a well-known travel agency that serves clients for over 50 years. They are recognized in providing tour packages and travel services at the comfort of their clients at the most convincing prices. They are also a member of recognized travel associations such as Philippine Travel Agencies Association, Philippine Tour Operators Association, Philippine IATA Agents Association and Tourism Promotions Board.

The setting of this study revolves only in National Capital Region that the proponents believe that this is where the Tourism Industry starts, revolves and ends.

The aim of this research is to determine the quality of their service to their guests by exhibiting the characteristics of a tour guide. This will be guided with more precise problem questions as follows:

- How does the respondents assess the performance of the tour guides in EMC Tours Inc. and Baron Travel Corporation in terms of:
  - Reliability
  - Assurance
  - Tangibility
  - Empathy
  - Responsiveness
- What are the challenges and issues encountered by the guides relative to service quality?

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

The researchers conduct a study to assess the service quality of tour guides in selected travel and tours operator in National Capital Region (NCR). This study named “*Service Quality of Tour Guides in Selected Tour Operators in National Capital Region and Region IV-A*” used qualitative research method and purposive sampling.

The study has ten (10) respondents. Five (5) tour guides from EMC Travel and Tours and five (5) from Baron Travel Corporation. The researchers utilized the primary data to observe and collect from our experiences.

The researchers provided an interview questionnaire approved by the thesis adviser that will be the main source of data gathering to know the performance of the tour guides. The researchers applied the semi-structured type of interview. The semi-structured interview gives fairness and reliable results that makes it acceptable. (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson, Docent 2016).[10] The researchers used purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling which the researchers get to decide to who to include in the study. This means participants are selected because they are likely to generate useful data. (Purposive sampling, 2012)[9] The researchers also utilized qualitative research methods to conduct with opinions, reasons and motivations.

The proponents personally interviewed the respondents from EMC Travel and Tours and tour guides from Baron Travel Corporation. Some answered via e-mail, personally handwritten answer sheet based on the guide questions and personal interview. Some respondents preferred these kinds of set up because their hectic schedule that most of the time they are unavailable. Some respondents that was personally interviewed were arranged into a group interview in a café before their upcoming seminar which was their only time they offered to participate.

The personal interviews lasted for an hour with recordings provided. The proponents expected the answers from the respondents were one to two days after the researchers have sent the guide questions through e-mail. In the other hand, the

guides from Baron Travel Corporation only preferred handwritten answers from the guide questions which was conducted for a very long time because most of their tour guides refuse to participate. The proponents had been going back and forth in their office for five times just to complete the five guides to answer the given guided questionnaire.

The validity of the study used content analysis. The researchers have worked breaking down the data from recordings and e-mails to transcripts from interviews conducted as basis of analyzing the challenges that is needed to be identified as stated in the statement of the problem. Finally, the researchers utilized the dimensions of SERVQUAL model in typology such as reliability, assurance, tangible, empathy and responsiveness as a foundation.

A letter of request was given to the president of the company as well as the approved interview that were given to the respondents. The respondents were given first a consent letter to have an interview. Not everyone the researchers invited to participate agreed to do the interview because many travel and tour operations agencies did not want their guides to contribute in this study. In addition, some guides of the chosen agencies were hard to convince to answer or participate in the study of the proponents because of their eventful calendar and personal reasons that made the research have long duration of collecting data.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### A. Performance of Tour Guides

The first statement of the problem was examined was the performance of tour guides in EMC Tours Inc. and Baron Travel Corporation in terms of the five dimensions of SERVQUAL; Reliability, Assurance, Tangibility, Empathy, and Responsiveness.

The first dimension that was examined was the reliability of tour guides to perform the promised service accurately. For this, the respondents were asked on how do they show willingness to help their tourists and how do they show interest in solving their tourist’s concerns. The respondents had different answers and views as shown on the table below.

**Table 1. Reliability**

| Reliability  | Frequency |
|--|-----------|
| Entertain every tourists’ questions or request                                   | 1         |
| Do extra efforts that may help them even if it does not concern you or your job. | 1         |
| Ask them if they need something.   | 2         |
| Anticipate guest’s needs by body gestures.                                       | 1         |
| Be the first to approach.  | 1         |
| Check if they are comfortable.   | 1         |
| Go the extra mile.   | 1         |
| Spoil your guests.   | 1         |
| Pay attention and get involved.  | 3         |
| Focus on them.   | 1         |
| Be on top of the concern.  | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>14</b> |

One respondent answered that in order to show willingness and interest in solving a tourist’s concern is by going extra mile, which means doing extra efforts that may help them even if it is not necessarily needed. This leads us to another answer by one of our respondents that says another way is by spoiling your guests. But most of the respondents said that paying attention and getting involved with their tourists is how they show willingness to help and solve their problems. One of the tour guides from Baron said:

*“Yung nga katulad ng sabi ko kanina, dapat yung attention mo nakatutok lang sa kanila. Kunwari kaoag may questions sila regarding dun sa tour, syempre kailangan mong sagutin yon or ask them if may mga tanong man sila para alam mo diba?”* (Like me I told them a while ago, your attention should focus to them (tour guide). For example, they have a questions regarding to the tour, of course you should answer that or ask them if they have a questions for you to know right?)

Another guide from EMC said:

*“By paying attention and getting involved.”*

The proponents agree with the statements given by the respondents. To gain a customer’s trust, one must show that he/she is willing to listen and help. Participating in tours similar on the ones that they handle helped the proponents to observe how professional tour guides do their responsibility as they interact with their tourists. The tourists and tour guides must have a connection with each other from the start of the tour day for them to be comfortable in exchanging thoughts and solutions, telling their concerns and what the tourists are curious about.

This most common statement is supported by Min (2015)[11], saying that the tour guides who gives exclusive care to their tourists can give possible growth to the satisfaction of the tourists. This includes satisfying the group that the guide is leading and giving the accurate service that is meant to be given; and use the listening skills to have a successful interpersonal connection with the tourists to handle. The tour guides are expected to meet the needs of the tourists, such as leading the group throughout the travel and give them a hand in solving some conflicts (Centinkaya, 2015)[12] which is particularly similar to the second most common answer that says they need to pay attention.

The second dimension that was assessed was the assurance that the guides have the knowledge and confidence in answering all concerns of the tourists and on how they make their tourists feel safe during tours. As show on the table below, the respondents answer all leads to one point, they make their tourists safe by constantly informing them on the state, rules and regulations of their destination. Keeping an eye on them or letting them form a group or a buddy to buddy system makes the job easier. The respondents also said that a guide must be full of confidence and knowledge in answering their tourists’ questions but only answer questions that are based on accurate information. The respondents said that once they don’t know the answer to a question, they make sure to do a quick research and get back to their tourists.

**Table 2. Assurance**

| Assurance   | Frequency |
|---|-----------|
| Inform them of the destination’s state, rules and regulations     | 3         |
| Always keep an eye with the tourists.                             | 2         |
| Form a group.   | 1         |
| Must be 100% confident.   | 2         |
| Always play safe and use trusted data.                            | 2         |
| Answer questions based on accurate information.                   | 2         |
| Don’t make up things if you don’t know the answer to a question.  | 1         |
| Do quick research if you don’t know the answer to their question. | 2         |
| <b>Total</b>  | 15        |

One of the tour guides said:

*“Tell them the do’s and don’t’s...dapat ipaalala mo lagi yung rules and regulations lalo na kapag nasa restriction areas sila.”* (“Tell them the do’s and don’t’s...You should remind them the rules and regulations especially when they are in restriction areas”)

Another guide said:

*“Inform them of the environment’s state, rules, and regulations.”*

When asked about how confident they are in answering questions, one of the guides said:

*“Must be 100% confident. But if there’s a question that I’m not sure of, I tell them I’ll get back to them and do a quick research.”*

Another guide from EMC said:

*“Always play safe and use trusted data and information. If you don’t know, tell them you’ll get back to them then do a quick research.”*

The researchers agree with the respondents’ statement. Being in an unfamiliar place tends to make to feel tourists nervous or scared but by knowing a place’s state, rules and regulations, people will feel safer and secure. It’s because they know



exactly what to do and what not to do. Also, a smart guide is good, but a smart and confident guide is better. Confidence attracts tourists' attention that makes the tourists want to listen more.

According to a study by Centinkaya (2015)[12], tour guides should possess the knowledge that will strongly develop their relationship to the tourists. There are specific topics provided in the study such as Foreign Language Knowledge to communicate with foreign visitors. In our country this foreign language is known to be English because it is widely used, now according to an article from Sunstar (2017)[13], some tour guides are encouraged to learn another foreign language by Department of Tourism 7 Director Joshur Judd Lanete II, to cater more specific foreign tourists that would need more assistance using the language that the tourists are comfortable with. Language classes are offered such as teaching Mandarin, Russian, Korean, Japanese, and Thai. ([www.sunstar.com.ph/article/405782](http://www.sunstar.com.ph/article/405782)) Another knowledge is General Knowledge where it covers topics from science, art, economy and politics because some modern tourists about these topics in a destination, that leads to Destination Knowledge and Cultural Knowledge that will introduce the information that the destination or attraction. This includes familiarization in geography, history and the culture that tackles understanding of values and perspectives that aims not to cause any racism or discrimination. Knowing this information from the destination will help the guides be confident in answering questions from the tourists. Many visitors nowadays known that tour guides are educators that they can learn something from. The respondents also mentioned about keeping their tourists safe, that is supported by another topic which is having the first-aid knowledge. First-aid knowledge according to the same study is to provide immediate medical solution for an injury from a non-expert but is trained. It is a must to know how to be calm during an emergency and preventing the tourists from possible danger.

The third dimension that was examined is the tangibility of tour guides in accordance to their physical appearance and preparation before the tour. The respondents were asked to comment on their perceptions of the proper way of presenting oneself in front of the tourists. Most of them answered that tour guides should always dress smart as dressing smart have a positive impact for the tourists. They should have proper grooming and must always look neat.

When asked on how do they prepare before the tour, most of the respondents said that they review the place, itinerary for the tour and most importantly, the profiles of the guest to avoid future conflicts, culture and language barrier.

**Table 3. Tangibility**

| Tangibility  | Frequency |
|--|-----------|
| Review the place, itinerary, and the profiles of the tourists    | 6         |
| Be at the meeting place at least 1-2 hours before the tour       | 1         |
| Check the equipment you'll be using (microphone, megaphone, bus) | 1         |
| Always wear your company ID                                      | 1         |
| Dress neatly and smartly   | 9         |
| Proper posture   | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>19</b> |

Here are some statements from the respondents:

*"Always dress neat, proper hygiene is a must."*

*"Proper posture and grooming....Be prim and proper."*

*"Syempre, inaalam ko yung lugar ng pupuntahan namin....You need to review para hindi ka mapahiya sa mga tourists and besides job mo takafa yun eh, alamain mo dapat lahat."* ("Of course, I am researching every destination that we are going to....You need to review so it's not embarrassing to the tourist and besides it's your job, you should know all of that")

*"The agency emails us the itinerary, pag-aaralan namin 'yon."* ("The agency email us the itinerary, (so) we will study that.")

*"Days before the tour, review the places and profiles of tourists."*

The proponents agree that front liners must always dress neatly. Another key to gain tourists' attention is to look presentable. Dressing up isn't the only thing that tourists like; they also find it amusing when guides know them and their culture. Knowing the itinerary makes the tour a lot easier because it avoids future conflict and saves a lot of time. Studying how the itinerary works will make the guides more accessible to think things that are possibly going to happen especially in emergencies.

These statements are supported by Holland and Leslie (2017)[14], they are considered as leaders of the tour that should have strong familiarity of the culture and legacy that makes the tourist involvement and understanding be positively developed. With this, reviewing details about the destination and the profiles of the tourists saves tour guides from having conflicts with their tourists. Also, it is the responsibility of a tour guide to have a professional data regarding transportation, accommodation and services offered by the destination. Along with that, tour guides should have a good time management that includes being always on time, because being late can cause the group to be harder and impossible to manage (Cetinkaya, 2015)[17]. The respondents also mentioned about the physical appearance of the guide. According to another statement in Cetinkaya's study, the response of the tourists will depend on how the tour guides present themselves that can establish a leader role to them. The guides should always have clean and suitable clothes for the tour. They should be dressed very comfortably that will not make them feel troubled and drained (Cetinkaya, 2015)[18].

The fourth dimension that was examined was the empathy of the tour guides toward their guests. For these the respondents were asked on how they give their tourists equal attention and at the same time how do they make them feel that they are approachable. As seen on the table above, the respondents have different ways of showing their empathy. Some mention touching base with everyone makes it fair.

**Table 4. Empathy**

| <b>Empathy</b>   | <b>Frequency</b> |
|--|------------------|
| Attend to their needs.   | 1                |
| Build a rapport and address them with their names.             | 1                |
| Approach first.  | 4                |
| Touch base with everyone.                                      | 1                |
| Always smile and be polite.                                    | 1                |
| Be confident, reliable, dependent, patient and understandable. | 1                |
| Maintain eye and hand gestures with everyone.                  | 1                |
| Make them feel that they are a part of a family.               | 1                |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>11</b>        |

When being asked about how do they make their tourists feel like they are approachable, the respondents answered by being confident, reliable, attending to their needs. Some answered maintaining eye and hand gestures makes tourists want to approach them. But most of the respondents have mentioned that approaching first is the best way to make your tourist feel that they are approachable. It builds rapport, as one of the respondents mentioned.

Here are some statements from the respondents:

*“Attend to their needs. I make sure I approach every single tourist.”*

*“Treat your guests with equal attention, by building rapport.”*

*“See to it na naaddress mo both general yung attention may even information, well equal treatment na yun eh”* (“See to it that you are addressing (them) general both their attentions (and) even information, well that is equal treatment”)

When handling big groups, it is almost impossible to give all of them equal attention especially with the fact that tourists like being taken care of. We, the researchers, agree that to handle different concerns, a guide must make time for each concern. He/she must make sure that they all get the same amount of attention.

The statements by these experienced tour guides is supported by statements from Cetinkaya that has also mentioned that the guides should have massive respect on their tourist and give them every attention they need regardless of their nationality, age and other factors. In order to get the trust of the tourists, the guides should be able to show that they are willing to listen and comfort them. Tour Guide is defined in the paper as a person who generates a pleasant surrounding for the people visiting the area, which means guides should always make the tourists feel welcome, comfortable just like the respondents' answers. (Cetinkaya, 2015)[19].

The last dimension that was examined was the responsiveness of the tour guides to address customer's concerns.

The respondents were asked, how they make sure they gave the service that they promised to their tourists and if they think they gave the tourist the best experience during the tour respectively. The respondents have different ways on

making sure that they gave the best experience their tourists deserve. Some say that they make sure to attend their needs and go the extra mile, like making sure that they have fun and giving their tourists some time to enjoy on their own. But most of the respondents said that they ask questions after the tour just to make sure that their tourists had fun and was able to learn something from the tour or if they have been able to attend to every single tourists' demands at the end of every tour.

**Table 5. Responsiveness**

| Responsiveness   | Frequency |
|--|-----------|
| Attend to their needs  | 1         |
| Ask the tourist at the end of the tour.                      | 2         |
| Make sure that they learn something at the end of each tour. | 1         |
| Seeing their tourist smile at the end of the tour.           | 1         |
| Go with the extra mile.                                      | 1         |
| See the way they respond and give tips.                      | 1         |
| Let the tourist have some fun                                | 1         |
| Make sure that they're enjoying and having fun.              | 1         |
| Ask for feedback   | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>10</b> |

One of the tour guides from EMC said:

*“It is still best to ask the tourists at the end of the tour for their honesty if you have given them the maximum happiness or at least contentment of the tour.*

Another guide also said:

*“At the end of the tour, clarify with the tourists if their concern has been solved properly...”*

The researchers agree with the respondents that the best way is by asking. It is the simplest way to see or check because you get an answer or response immediately. This statement is supported by Cetinkaya's (2015) [20] study; it is said specifically that giving the visitors satisfaction in being present in the tour that availed the service are considered the primary responsibility of the tour guides. The guides also mentioned that they look, ask for feedbacks, ask questions at the end of each tour to know that they gave the experience that their tourists need. The tourists' answers reflect on how well or how bad they did during tours. This specific answer by the guides makes it acceptable under the Characteristics of the tour guiding profession in Cetinkaya's (2015) [21] study that says it is a profession that is amusing, thrilling and an experience that will make them develop themselves professionally.

### **B. Challenges Encountered by Tour Guides**

It is necessary to comprehend that tour guides have important role in every tourists and destinations. As a top service contributor, they must leave a good impression. In the other hand, some unfortunate encounters are unavoidable, and the proponents identified and classified the respondents' answers by the SERVQUAL indicators.

**Table 6. Problem 2 – Reliability**

| Reliability                              | Frequency |
|--|-----------|
| Stubborn and demanding tourist           | 2         |
| Language barrier                         | 2         |
| Difference in tourist's level of comfort | 2         |
| Dishonest tour partner                   | 1         |
| Tourists with disability                 | 1         |
| Tourists asking unrelated topics         | 1         |
| Uncomfortable tourists                   | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>10</b> |

Table 6 presents the challenges encountered by tour guides relative to service quality. In assessing the reliability of tour guides, most of them mentioned challenges such as dishonest tour partner (boatman etc.), difference in tourist's level of comfort, language barrier and stubborn and demanding customers affect their ability to perform the promised service



dependably and accurately. Tour guides have faced difficulty to communicate with the foreign markets such as Chinese, Japanese, Korean, etc. The language ability of the tour guide, leading to their dissatisfaction because in some cases, tour guides could not understand, or they misunderstood tourists' requests.

One of the EMC tour guide said:

*"Yung requests nila....kasi tulad nung mga guests ko, may bus naman eh, gusto*

*maglakad ganyan kainit. Edi parang gusto ko nang maiyak".* (Their requests makes me feel crying sometimes because even there is buses provided they prefer to walk even it's scorching hot.)

For the dishonest tour partner EMC tour guide said:

*"It's not only interest but it is your job na for example karamihan ng mga ano dyan, may mga problems dyan, dyan sa mga, ano ba yan, mga dishonest na, for example yung sa Pagsanjan ang dami dyan na mga boatman na ... sa mga turista, mga ganun diba"* ("It's not only interest but it's your job for example, most of the (locals) there are dishonest"

Other guide said *"You check on the ano mga curtain kung nagddrive dyan tapos ang dumi dumi, mga ganun and yung mga PWD, hindi lang naman PWD but older people diba?"* ("You check on the curtain and notice that it is dirty even while driving, (complains) like that from PWD, not just PWD but also older people.)

In the recent study of Wu, Wang, et. Al (2017) [16] about Elderly tourists, they found out that this certain group of tourists can be categorized into four (4) sections, where they mentioned stubborn tourists as one of them. The tourists that are participating in the tour can be very pleading into their tour guides in a specific demands or requests, requiring them to stay and sacrifice their time of rest. This profession can be considered hectic and can make a guide be exhausted, as they are on duty for the whole duration of the tour.

In assessing the assurance of tour guides to inspire trust and confidence to the tourists, most of the respondents said that the most common challenges they encountered includes: tour guides are always worried on the safety and security of the tourists, misinform tour guides on the itinerary of the tour, encountered unexpected situations (accidents, etc.), experiencing cultural differences and terrorism threats. Because of the very nature of the tourist guides job, travelling with tourists at times on long itineraries make them vulnerable. Being loosely connected with travel agencies there is no any protection in terms of life insurance or any medical insurance. The lack of knowledge to address concerns affects negatively for the tourist satisfaction and a black mark for image of the tour operator.

**Table 7. Problem 2 – Assurance**

| Assurance  | Frequency |
|--|-----------|
| Safety and security of the tourist                 | 3         |
| Cultural differences                               | 2         |
| Guides can't express their selves well             | 1         |
| Dangerous destinations (Quiapo...)                 | 1         |
| Unexpected situations about money                  | 1         |
| Misinform tour guides on the itinerary of the tour | 1         |
| Terrorism threats                                  | 1         |
| Accidentally gives wrong information               | 1         |
| Nervous tour guides                                | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>                                       | <b>12</b> |

*"So you have to explain to your guest na mayroong mga bagay na maaring maoffend kayo which is basically normal sa kanila. Diba? Uhhh, tawag doon, so this would, you know, help them understand.* ("So you have to explain to your guest that there are things that may (sound) offending which is basically normal to them. Right? So this would help them understand")

*"Uhh, in terms of ano 'yon, yung protecting them? Making them feel safe. Uhhh, yun na nga, na tawag doon, you explain to them kung ano ba 'yon, yung mga dapat bantayan. In terms of pag nagturista ka, you go around, maraming vendors."* ("In terms of protecting them? Making them feel safe. That's how we call it, you explain to them what the things are needed to be protected. In terms being a tourist, you go around, there are a lot of vendors.")

“Nagwithdraw sa ATM, walang lumabas na pera pero nagdeduct dun sa ano niya tapos nagzero balance siya. Naku, eh ‘di paglabas naming hanap kami ng BPI yun eh. So BPI, nagpatransaction record kami para to make sure na pagdating niya dun sa bansa niya may mapakita siya na transaction. Syempre magpapanic siya. Nung nakuha niya na yung transaction report na pwede niya ipakita dun, so parang kalmado na siya. Kahit na magcause ka ng 2 hours delay yun. Kasi kaunting ganyan lang, kaunting ikot, kaunting ano, delay na. Malaking epekto yun sa ano eh.” (Withdrawal in ATM, there is no money that is deducted, and it turned out to be zero balance. Oh no, when we went outside we searched for BPI (another bank)... that can cause delay)

“you have to ano, you have to be transparent also. Like for example pano diba, you have to tell them yung.... yung culture kasi mamaya mayroon silang... mashock sila doon sa ano eh....sa ano eh, sa culture ng environment eh.” (“you have to be transparent also. Like for example, you have to tell them the..the culture because later on they will feel..(culture) shock there...that’s (their) culture environment”)

“If you are new, confidence is of course, you have to face your tourists na well-groomed ka, and then equipped ka with the product knowledge, pero nandoon yung kaba. Kasi the moment you step out in your guests you can look directly into their eyes na iniisa-isa mo sila ganun pagkatapos nun tadtarin ka talaga ng salita nung una palang, makukuha mon a kaagad yung attention nila.” (“If you are new, confidence is of course, you have to face your tourist that you are well-groomed, and then you’re equipped with the product knowledge, but there’s nervousness. Because the moment you step out in your guests you can look directly into their eyes one by one and then after that (they) will ask you a lot of questions, in the first place, you already get their attention”)

The proponents have seen a study from Maximiliano, Skoll (2016) [15] that each custom, beliefs, principles have innovated habits to adapt in every situation. This is how they studied about understanding safety in the tourism industry and they explained that safety should be focused on rather than just seeing what the risks are. Tourists also sees safety as stress according to Centinkaya’s (2015) [12] research. Also, it is mentioned that it is the tour guides’ effort to make the setting safe for the tourists and always be ready for sudden inconveniences. Tour guides are considered as mediators concerning the tourists and the unfamiliar setting, that makes the respondents say that they are most worried in tourists’ safety.

For the tangibility dimension, most of the tour guides said that challenges include: tourists are not dressing appropriately based on the itinerary and there is also a lack in guests profiling. With this, tour guides were not able to address each tourist concern since he lacks the necessary information or background of his guests.

**Table 8. Problem 2 – Tangibility**

| Tangibility   | Frequency |
|---|-----------|
| Lack of guests profiling  | 3         |
| Tourists are not dressing appropriately based on the tour itinerary | 2         |
| Alibis of tour guides when they are late                            | 1         |
| Assign in a place where the guides are unfamiliar                   | 1         |
| Perfectionist tourist   | 1         |
| Tend to forgot the important facts about the destination            | 1         |
| Stuttering in front of the tourist                                  | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>10</b> |

“Mayroon pa kasing mga.. mga guide na mayroong specialization. Manila, yung mga Manila guides hindi na nag-aaral yan alam na nila. Pero yung katulad ng.. ikaw taga Cavite ka and ang forte mo is Laguna tapos dala mo yung limang German diba? Ikaw ang magdadala.” (“There are guides that have specialization. Manila, guides from Manila (they) don’t need to study that because they already know that. But like from you...you are from Cavite and your forte is Laguna and then you have five German right? You will take that.”)

“Tsaka as part of the preparation, as part of the travel agency ano ba yung mga profile ng mga to kasi iba-iba yung profile ng iba-ibang nationality so anu-ano ba? Mga pari ba to o ano tapos yung mga ano age nila, interest nila? Ano bang ano so ayun part din ng preparation.” (“And as part of the preparation, as part of travel agency (you have to know) the profile because there are different profile that has different nationality. If they are priest or their age, interest. So that’s part of preparation.”)

*“yung needs ng iba in favor doon sa mga ibang tourist so dapat flexible ka at tsaka multi-task mag pa-practice ka ng multi-tasking.”* (“their needs in favor to the other tourists so you must be flexible and practicing the multi-tasking”)

*“Karamihan ng the new guides, marami pang mga, kasi first, is a given situation. Your residence. The agency will text us will email us the itinerary, so pag-aaralan namin yon... pag-aaralan namin kung saan kami ano... always be there at least 2 hours before the tour. Kasi you cannot reason out, ‘ma’am, I’m sorry, I’m late because there’s an accident, the traffic was so heavy.’”* (“Most of the new guides, first there is a lot of given situation. Your residence, the agency will text us (or) email us the itinerary, so we will study that.. you must be there at least 2 hours before the tour. Because you cannot reason out, (like) ‘ma’am, I’m sorry, I’m late because there’s an accident, the traffic was so heavy’)

*“then iwasan mo yung pag stutter sa harap ng tourists. Kaya nga dapat alam mo talaga sinasabi mo sa kanila eh.”* (“then avoid the stuttering in front of the tourists. That’s why you must know what you are saying to them”)

Tourist profiling is important for the tour guides to see what kind of service the tourists wants them to execute. This makes them worry because sometimes they must deal with the adjustment to a specific nationality that has completely different culture from the local tour guide by surprise because of the lack of information that is given for them to prepare. An example is shown by a specific study for elderly tourists that they are the group of people who have weak physical strength than the younger ones and they are more vulnerable, meaning they need extra care and be more sensitive when it comes to details like the food, cleanliness, peaceful setting and so on. (Wu, Wang, et. Al, 2017) [16]

For the Empathy dimension, tour guides encountered problem due to differences in nationality and culture of the guests in which they can’t respond immediately on their concerns and needs. This makes it difficult for foreigners to get quality service. Sometimes, the tour guide’s sense of humor is unnecessary in a package tour’ due to the cultural differences between foreign tourists and tour guide, or the lack of language ability of domestic tour guides.

**Table 9. Problem 2 – Empathy**

| Empathy   | Frequency |
|---|-----------|
| Differences in nationality and culture                        | 2         |
| Tourist that does not want to cooperate                       | 2         |
| Tourists that always want to address them with their names.   | 1         |
| Jealous tourist   | 1         |
| Tourist feels unimportant                                     | 1         |
| Some tourists give subjective comments and irrational actions | 1         |
| Build rapport   | 1         |
| Tourist who always wants attention                            | 1         |
| Tourist who doesn't wants any attention                       | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>11</b> |

*“You are responsible to have to touch base with everyone para hindi sila ma-left out diba? Kasi meron yung iba pagtinignan mo ayaw talaga makipag usap diba? Mayroon naman yung iba KSP”* (“You are responsible to have to touch base with everyone, so they won’t left out right? Because there are (some people) that they want to talk right? There is also a KSP (meaning: a person who has lack of attention)

*“Of course you touch base with the everyone pero you get to see the people will always separate from the group not entirely naiiwan yung grupo mo but they would just follow, they do not want to be involve like communicating mayroon kasing mga tao na okay na yan sige okay na alis na tayo ganon”* (“Of course, you touch base with everyone but you get to see the people (who) always separate from the group not entirely left out the group but they would just follow, they do not want to be involve like communicating (because) there are some people who are just okay with that, like ‘come on let’s go”)

*“You make them feel that they are part of the family so kasi sa ibang bansa parang ano very cold sila like this is the coliseum next see the church diba? Ang Filipino hindi ang ganito ganyan meron tayong emotion”* (“you make them feel that they are part of the family because there are cold people from other countries like ‘this is the coliseum, next (we) see the church’ right? The Filipinos are not like them (because) we have emotions.”)

This problem by the guides in terms of communicating well with another culture tends to relate to having the lack of information prepared for the tour proper, specifically the tourist profiling that is mentioned earlier. Centinkaya (2015) [12] concluded her study that tour guides overall performance can form the anticipation of the tourists and one of the ways is to consider the cultural differences as the guides are obliged to break two cultures into one for better understanding and communication.

In assessing the responsiveness of the tour guides to address their guests concerns, challenges include the following: Profit over service of some tour guides and some tourists are not cooperative. During the tour, some tourist guides preferred a high profit in which the tourists receive low cost goods and services. All those situations might make the service quality unstable, and tourists may sense the difference of the services they provide.

**Table 10. Responsiveness – Problem 2**

| Responsiveness  | Frequency |
|---|-----------|
| Tourists take concerning questions as insult                    | 2         |
| Tourists are not cooperative                                    | 2         |
| Guides practicing profit over service                           | 1         |
| Cold treatment from the tourists                                | 1         |
| Tourists that gives subjective comments and irrational actions  | 1         |
| Some tourists gets confuse over the information that were given | 1         |
| Unwelcoming tourists  | 1         |
| Misunderstanding  | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>10</b> |

*“Kailangan mo silang pansinin, kailangan mo silang, ‘excuse me, are you okay there guys? How about here? How is the a/c?’ yung ganon, yung binigyan mo sila ng, from the front, the mid then sa dulo, umiikot ka. Chinicheck mo yung ano, ‘how are you feeling here? Are you comfortable here?’ you spread your concern. Binigyan mo sila ng ano, hindi naman isa-isa eh, parang generalize mo nalang sabihin sakanila na kung komportable ba sila or naririnig ka ba nila, basta yung ways of calling the attention na you want them to take part in the story.”* (“You need to give them attention, you need to tell them ‘Excuse me, are you okay there guys? How about here? How is the a/c?’, something like that. You’re giving them (attention) from the front, the mid then at the back. You’re giving rounds. You’re checking, ‘how are you feeling here?’ ‘are you comfortable here?’, You spread your concern. You’re giving them attention if they’re comfortable or if they can hear you that doesn’t have to be asked individually. It’s like you’re doing it generally, you are giving them the ways of calling the attention that you want them to take part in the story.”)

*“Naiinis ako sa mga estudyante na hindi nakikinig. Nag-e-effort ka. Tapos hindi sila makikinig... policy ko na kapag nagtotour ako sa mga estudyante kapag nagtotour, no-gadget policy. Kasi nagbabayad ka eh, bakit hindi ka nalang nagpaiwan sa bahay? Nagagalit ako kasi parents is spending money, tapos wala kang natutunan, ‘diba?... kailangan kapag natapos yung tour may natutunan ka... para saakin yung mga bagay na nagpapasaya sakin ay yung nakikita ko silang satisfied, yun yon.”* (I’m bothered by students that is not listening to you even you give effort. They were not listening. My policy everytime I am touring students that ‘No gadgets policy’ because you are the paying. (If you use gadgets) why did you not stay at home? I am upset because the parents are spending money, and then you don’t learn something, right? The tour should end with some learnings. To me seeing them satisfied makes me happy. That’s it.)

*“Ah sa paghandle ng different concerns? Dapat isa isa lang, kailangan isolve mo muna yung question o concern ng isa sabay next naman hindi mo kasi kayang pagsabayin yan eh maguguluhan ka lang.”* (Ah, in handling different concerns? You should attend to them one by one. You need to solve the question of one and then do the next. You can’t do it all at once because it will be confusing.)

The problem in here is that, the tourists find it offensive when the guide is showing their concern. Tour guides tend to be worried about their guests especially to people that needs constant attention and care. These tour guides also cater to students for a trip that is supposed to be educational for them, but some students ignore the fact that they should be lending their ears to the guides to learn something new.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Tour guide performance is one of the key concerns to the success of a package tour. Tour guides are capable of transforming a tour in to a memorable experience or vice versa and as a profession, it has its own challenges. The tour guide plays an essential role in the success of the sector by delivering high quality services. Working on the front line, tour guides are leading players in enhancing the image and the reputation of tourist destinations, with the service quality that they deliver regarded as an important indicator for measuring overall success of the tourism industry.

The study concludes that the tour guides themselves have the core responsibility to improve their intellectual and professional qualities to resolve some tourists concerns. In principle, guides must be trained with an emphasis on customer service, must possess strong abilities in verbal and non-verbal communication, must have received current training, must be knowledgeable about relevant local history and cultures and present accurate information, and must be knowledgeable about relevant natural history in the environments what they visit, must be highly proficient in native and English language, and educational techniques must be used to share this information in an engaging manner with guests.

Tour guides should focus on their organization skill, including time management and professional competence skill. Tour guides need to enhance the knowledge of the destination as well as the knowledge of culture of customers they are serving by learning and reading newspaper and browsing the internet. Tour operator therefore, might also provide short courses or simple program/s inviting fellow professionals to improve this knowledge for tour guides. Additionally, the ability of tour guides to handle complaints and to solve problems or conflicts in the tour is a significant factor leading to the success of a package tour. Because of this reason, tour guides must be keen to realize all of abnormal things that happened in a tour. They also should show sound judgment in solving the problems to avoid the disagreement among tourists that may break the tour's atmosphere. Consequently, understanding the culture of foreign tourists is an important skill of tour guides. In terms of appearance, it can be said that tour guides should practice showing their honest, good personality, friendliness that lead to the reliability from tourists. For this reason, the role of tour operator is also very important in providing training programs for tour guides. Tour guides, moreover, should attach much importance to their clothes to be neat and appropriate.

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