THE ROLE OF TOURIST GUIDES AND THEIR IMPACTS ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: A CRITIQUE ON SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is a multidisciplinary industry and therefore involves many different stakeholders for its operational activities. An essential element for sustainable tourism development in any tourist destination is the participation of active stakeholders and their collaborations. Among them the tourist guides play a major role in the tourism industry since tourists need to have a clear picture of the country and its offerings, laws, rules and regulations and other expected behavioural patterns. Moreover, guides should have the ability to transform the tourist visit into an unforgettable experience. In addition to the quality and ability of tourist guides, there are many problems and issues associated with their services that can impact on the ultimate satisfaction of the tourists. Therefore, the primary objective of this research is to recognize the impact of tourist guides in moving tourism development in a sustainable direction. Additionally, the study investigates the problems and difficulties faced by tourist guides while serving in the industry and its effect on tourists' satisfaction.

The study was conducted using the mixed methodology and collected data from different sources such as questionnaire survey with tourists, semi-structured interviews and discussions with tourist guides and the different stakeholders and personal observations. Additionally, tourists' comments posted on the TripAdvisor web page were reviewed to acquire a comprehensive understanding about the issue, from the tourists' perspective. It was revealed that tourist guides contend with multiple issues and problems including unfair competition from unlicensed tourist guides, less respect and recognition from the society and trade, low remuneration, lack of job security, poor and unfriendly working conditions while performing their duties and responsibilities. Also, many tourist guides have low education and training and, therefore, exhibit a low service quality. Furthermore, the guides' behaviours may negatively impact on the industry's sustainability by forcing tourists to buy things or attend activities at their own expenses; relying on clichéd introductions to the sights; demonstrating insufficient knowledge about tourism products, services and access routes; not being conversant with foreign languages; charging and demanding tips; harassment of tourists and bad service attitudes.

Keywords: Tourist Guides, Industry Sustainability, Tourists Satisfaction, Impacts, Sri Lanka
1. Introduction

Tourism is a multifaceted industry and its operation involves the collective efforts of various players and they bear their own roles and responsibilities for a sound tourism movement. As an intermediary between hosts and guests, tourist guides act in a wide range of roles when conducting guided tours. According to the studies (Cohen, 1985; Fine & Speer, 1985; Holloway, 1981; Hughes, 1991), tourist guides play different roles within their work, such as leader, salesperson, teacher, information-giver and organizer. Since tourism is a highly human oriented and pleasure industry, it is very difficult to run the industry without getting the support of tour facilitators including tourist guides. They have become one of the key players with extensive control and influence over the quality of services rendered. The implications for overall tourist satisfaction and the future well-being of the industry are substantial. On a practical day-to-day level, there are numerous complaints about the roles and behaviour of tourist guides due to the mismatch between expectations and actual services of the tourist guides and that is problematic for multiple reasons.

Therefore, the main objective of this study is to explore the role of tourist guides and their impacts on moving tourism development in sustainable directions. Additionally, the study will investigate the problems and difficulties faced by the tourist guides and the attendant effects on tourist satisfaction.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to Tourist Guides and Their Roles

Tour guiding has been the subject of extensive research activity over the past 30 years. Robotic (2010) explains that “the origin and evolution of the role of tourist guide was expounded by Cohen (1985),” whose pioneering research in tourism helped lay the foundation for contemporary scientific scholarship focused on tourism. The broad range of transactions conducted by tour guides has been analysed by numerous scholars. The complex nature of tourist guides’ functions, however, precludes a singular means of describing or summarizing their diversified roles in the context of rapidly expanding markets for tourism worldwide. Some tourist guides, for example, are self-employed and operate either semi-autonomously or fully independently by creating and marketing their own tours as freelance tour guides. Others are employed by the travel industry and conduct predesigned tours, while many guides are employed by corporations or organizations.

The World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (2005) defines a tourist guide as a person who guides visitors in the language of their choice and interprets the cultural and natural heritage of an area. Pond (1993) adds that a skilful guide is one of the most valuable assets a tourism company can have, given the guides’ ubiquitous and highly visible role in a business or company, as they interact with visitors frequently and for sustained periods of time. Despite multiple definitions for tourist guides, an internationally accepted definition is provided by the International Association of Tour Managers (IATM) and the European Federation of Tour Guide Association (EFTGA, 1998). Thus, a tourist guide is defined as a person who guides groups or individual visitors from abroad or from the home country through specific historical sites or venues, and enthusiastically promotes the cultural and natural heritage of the tour destination in an entertaining manner, and in the language of the visitor’s choice.

Ap and Wong (2000) highlight that tourist guides provide an important part of the interface between the host destination and visitors since front-line employees are very much responsible for the overall impression and satisfaction with the tour services offered by a destination. Therefore, the job of the tourist guides is described as leading, interpretative, inspiring and entertaining in a
specific geographical or environmental setting in which their specialized knowledge of various languages is applied.

2.2 Professionalism in Tour Guiding

As unofficial ambassadors of the host country, fundamental prerequisites for tourist guides are positive personal, ethical and moral characteristics including honesty, modesty, dignity, and trustworthiness. Equally important are intellectual qualities including comprehensive knowledge and a strong grasp of the subject matter, good analytical skills, a comparative perspective for historic cultural sites, and a commitment to continuous learning and personal enrichment. Moreover, essential professional qualities include the ability to communicate and present facts in the visitor’s language, the capacity to lead and organize groups, correct posture and eye contact, and the ability to tell stories (Tourist Guide Lecturer’s Code, 1985; Hettiarachchi, 2011).

The quality of services provided by tour guides correlates strongly with levels of overall tourist satisfaction. Most tourists have favourable tour experiences based on the good to excellent quality of services rendered through touring the most coveted points of attraction (Parasuraman et al., 1988). However, it must also be noted that the collective negative behaviour of tourist guides can be a significantly debilitating factor in levels of tourist satisfaction. For example, Pathirana & Gnanapala (2015) underscore inappropriate behaviours of site guides and helpers at cultural sites including demands for unreasonable fees, misrepresentation of services offered, deceptive and false information disseminated to tourists, physical and emotional harassment, and other unethical practices.

Geve et al. (1991) suggest that tour guides are responsible for tourist satisfaction with services provided in local destinations. Furthermore, tour guides can generate repeat and new business, and impact the image of tour companies, destinations and even the tour guides themselves (Mossberg, 1995; Pearce, 1984; Schmidt, 1979; Whipple et al., 1988; Wong & Ap, 1998). It is widely accepted that tour guides contribute not only to tourist satisfaction, but to destination image, marketing and branding (Baum, Hearns & Devine, 2007; Wong & Kwong, 2004).

Heung (2010) presents three major concepts to assess the perceived service quality of tour guides: core services delivery, customer orientation and communication effectiveness. Tour guides must possess the knowledge content for effective delivery of core services. Increased quantities of information provided by tour guides contribute to higher quality of services provided as most tourists rate their tours favourably on the basis of knowledge derived from a guide. The guide must have the capacity to articulate background information on the rich cultural heritage of a particular destination and must be aware of the policies, rules, laws and practices that are followed by a certain country, state or region to enlighten tourists and enrich their overall travel experience.

The understanding of professionalism lies in the basic concept of profession. Cogan (1953) defines profession as “a vocation whose practice is founded upon an understanding of the theoretical structure of some department of learning or science, and upon the abilities accompanying such understanding”. Barber (1963) suggests that professional behaviour may be defined in terms of four essential attributes: first, a high degree of generalized and systematic knowledge; second, a primary orientation to community interest rather than to individual self-interest; third, a high degree of self-control of behaviour through codes of ethics, and finally, a system of rewards (monetary and honorary) that is primarily a set of symbols of work achievement.
In the final analysis, it is imperative that guides prioritize tourists’ needs and interests first in providing superior value of services and enhancement of the overall tourist experience (Heung 2008). Critical tour leadership and management skills, therefore, include the ability to organize and handle tourist groups, coordination of affiliated vendors and suppliers of goods and services, time management, scheduling and logistics, and day-to-day problem solving. Tourist groups typically comprise a diverse range of individuals from many walks of life and varied backgrounds, thus interpersonal skills and the capacity for understanding cultural differences are paramount.

3. Methodology

The study was carried out adopting the both quantitative and qualitative methods. A questionnaire survey was employed mainly to collect data since it is the best method available to look at tourists’ attitudes and orientations regarding the service of tourist guides by gathering qualitative and quantitative information through both closed and open-ended questions. Through the questionnaire, the study measured the tourists’ satisfaction regarding the moral, intellectual and professional qualities of tourist guides. The cluster sampling method was used to reduce the regional biases and gained 121 completed questionnaires filled by the foreign tourists.

Interviews are widely used data collection method that allows researchers to focus on meaning rather than facts (Qu and Dumay, 2011). Also, the data collected through semi-structured, face to face interviews with 22 tourist guides representing 12 national and 10 chauffeur guides respectively. Interview participants were selected via a non-random, convenience and snowball sampling method. This non-probability sample was used because it was relatively easy to determine appropriate respondents however it is important to note that the participants cannot be considered to representative of a target population.

Non-participant observations were applied at various tourist sites in Negombo, Colombo, Kandy, Sigiriya to observe and record ways that tourist guides conduct tours, their interpretation skills at the sights, their behaviour and the personal appearance; allowing the researcher to determine the accuracy of the information gained in document analysis and survey questionnaires. Apart from that, the researchers had semi-structured interviews with a representative from government and other related tourism bodies (SLITHM, SLTDA), Sri Lanka Institute of National Tourist Guide Lecturers (SLINTGL), Sri Lanka Institute of Chauffeur Tourist Guide Lecturers (SLICTGL) and managerial bodies in travel agencies and hotels covering 5 from each. Finally, the researchers have reviewed the tourists’ comments appeared on TripAdviser and VirtualTourist web pages to identify their ideas on tourist guides in Sri Lanka.

The information used for this research also based on a review of the literature and documents relating to the Sri Lanka Tourism industry and tour guiding profession. The data sources includes government policy documents (such as Annual Statistical Report produced by Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority in 2013, TOURISM ACT No 38 OF 2005, Annual Report- Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism & Hotel Management, 2013), government media releases, peer-reviewed academic journals and books, customer feedback forms handled by various travel agencies. The authors were aware that the documents used could have varied in terms of quality of the data used (Bowen, 2009; Rosenberger & Stanley, 2006). The data collection process was conducted from January 2015 to April 2015.

4. Findings & Discussion

4.1 The role of tour guides and their impacts

The study has identified both the positive and negative impacts of tour guides in moving Sri Lanka tourism development in a sustainable direction.
The tourist guides occupy key front-line positions in the tourism industry and brings extensive benefits to the Sri Lanka’s tourism industry i.e. goodwill, ambassadorship, representative of the country’s unique history, and spokesperson for the nation’s distinctive cultural heritage. They have the unparalleled ability to enrich the knowledge level of individual tourists and transform the tourists' visit into a pivotal learning experience through their knowledge and interpretations. It is essential to highlight that 66% of surveyed tourists have not taken the services of tourist guides at any point during their visit due to the independent schedules and routes, no flexibility, guides demands for exorbitant fees, and widespread cheating of tourists. The freedom of autonomous travel in a trouble-free environment creates a powerful incentive for tourists to disengage from tourist guides altogether. The survey data also illuminate the negative outcomes the country may experience as a direct consequence of unprofessional conduct and the misbehaviour of tourist guides. Findings revealed that the tourist guides lack intellectual and professional skills rather than moral skills.

Lack of intellectual skills

The fast development of the Sri Lankan tourism industry demands more talented, capable and knowledgeable tour guides. However, from the study revealed that, only 27% of tourist guides have completed their secondary education level and most of them started tour guiding with their primary education and have improved though experiences. The researchers could identify through travel agencies that only 31% of the tourist guides may have got valid license and work as a licensed tourist guides. Further, revealed that most of the complaints are related to the unlicensed guides. However, some unlicensed tourist guides may perform better than the licensed with the vast experience they may have got from the long service in the industry.

Those unlicensed tourist guides without proper training exhibit the lack of intellectual skills and it results in cliché introduction to the sights and poor demonstration and presentation skills, insufficient knowledge about tourism product/destination and tend to tell lies when tourists are asking questions which the tourist guide to be unknown. In such cases, it affects negatively for the tourist satisfaction and also a black mark for image of the whole tourist guides and the country as well.

Also the foreign language proficiency of the most of the guides are very poor and the travel agents have faced difficult to find qualified tour guides for the markets Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Spanish, French with compared to other languages.

Lack of professional skills

- **Unstable quality of service**

It is revealed that unqualified and unlicensed tourist guides provide low quality services. During the round tour, tourist guides get push money from the relevant organization in which the tourists receive different goods and services. Therefore, the guides try their best to persuade tourists to buy things or spend money on certain items or activities and also want the tourists to stay more at the shopping centres rather than sight-seeing. Probably, some tourists are not interested in certain items or shopping, so they won’t follow the guidance of the tourist guides. Under such circumstances, some guides show bad attitude towards those tourists and the quality of services declines sharply. If tourists let the guides get lots of push money during their trip, the tourist guides will become extremely hospitable and enthusiastic. In some other cases, if the tourists are from high spending markets, the guides are very careful in providing services and they are usually fully-prepared before the trip and service attitude is also extremely good. When the tourists are from low income countries especially from India, the tourist guides will be perfunctory in providing services,
making the service quality decline sharply under such circumstances. All those situations might make the service quality unstable, and tourists may sense the difference of the services they provide.

- **Lacking good faith**
The lacking good faith of the tour guides is a significant problem for tourism industry. The good faith of guides may display in many ways such as whether they serve according to the reception plans and also whether they lured by the devious interests. However, in many real cases the study could notice that many guides do not display their good faith. They cheat the tourists together with the merchants and deviate from the professionalism. Some guides arbitrarily changed the route and took the tourists to go shopping for places which they have personal contacts instead of company recommended places. Finally, the tourists complained about the quality of the products that they purchased. Specially, the image of guides in the eyes of tourists is deteriorating due to their lack of good faith. It might finally affect the whole image of the company and the country itself. Therefore, every tourist guide should have good faith when providing services.

- **Charging tips at guides’ own will**
Many tourist guides asks tips from tourists which has greatly harmed the image of tourist guides. Guide tip means the gratuity for the guide at the clients own discretion based on the quality and level of service they receive and guides under no circumstances request or demand. But some guides demanding or arguing for tips until they get a satisfactory amount. The guide services become materialized because of the charging of tips, which greatly harmed the moods of tourists.

### 4.2 The problems and difficulties faced by the tour guides and its effect on tourist satisfaction

With the interviews had with the tourist guides, could identified various problems and difficulties faced by them while serving to the industry. The identified problems and difficulties have been discussed under three major criteria.

#### 4.2.1 Nature of the tourist guides’ job

- **Low remuneration**
Tourist guides may have two options in dealing with the travel agencies; either they can work as freelancers or can permanently attached to a travel agency and work with back to back tours. The tourist guides who are permanently attached to the travel agency normally get some kind of allowance but it is not fairly sufficient with comparing to the service they offer to the company even without having a time to concern about their personal life. Apart from that normally chauffeur guides get a Batta per day and the national guides get their guide fee per day. So in some cases travel agencies try to cut off their Batta or guide fees tactically just like paying them per night basis. However, the amount they receive as Batta is not sufficient to cover their daily expenses. The law remuneration sometimes leads them to earn money through various tactics like commission through tourist purchases, tips etc. The unnecessary forcing for this type of activities leads the tourists towards dissatisfaction.

- **Lack of job security**
Tourist guides are attached to the travel agencies on assignment basis; therefore, there is no security for their jobs. At any time the travel agency has the authority to fire them in any case; as there is no any formal appointment or any contract. Also, there is no any provision of EPF, ETF or any pension scheme for tourist guides those who play a big role in bringing foreign exchange to the Sri Lankan economy. The seasonality of the demand may affect the tourist guides keeping them out of
job sometimes for months. This problem sometimes leads in the minds of tourist guides to earn as much as possible when they got the opportunity.

- **Safety and security issues**
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. Also, there is a potential to infect various diseases both communicable and non-communicable.

4.2.2 Problems related to the socio-culture

- **Unfair competition**
The licensed tourist guides have to face big issue related to the unfair competition from unlicensed tourist guides. Unlicensed tourist guides would often cut price and also damage the guide professionalism by their poor quality of service and malpractices. This will harm the whole image of the Sri Lankan tourism industry.

- **Less respect and recognition from the society and trade**
Many guides are not much happy about the respect and recognition they get from the society and trade. Furthermore, their profession is not respectable among their family members as it is not a permanent career and the negative publicity. And also in case of some problematic incidents, the local police and authorities often mal-treat the tourist guides.

- **Touts/hawkers/beggars**
Tourist guides may face some threats from some disturbed characters like touts, hawkers, beach boys and beggars who are trying to disturb the tourists while on the tour. So the guides have to protect them from them while interpreting at the tour sites.

- **Restrictive for female tourist guides**
There are only few numbers of female tourist guides working in this tourism field. That may be due to the myth that the females cannot survive in tourism industry. In some cases, it is true as the nature of the tourist guides jobs is more challenging.

4.2.3 Problems related to poor and unfriendly working conditions

4.2.3.1 Poor Accommodation
Most of the chauffeur guides are not happy about their accommodation facilities (driver quarters) as many hotels run them inappropriately. As a policy some hotels do not provide accommodation for chauffeur guides in their premises, especially in the Colombo city hotels. In such cases, travel agents send the chauffeur guides to the nearest budget accommodation or some travel agents ask the guides to find a place by their own expenses.

National tourist guides are not vulnerable to this poor accommodation as they get the guide room in the same place where tourists are staying. But in some cases travel agents try to sell the guide room which they get on the complimentary basis, to the tourist group itself and find another cheaper place around the hotel for the tourist guide in order to increase their profit.

4.2.3.2 Unfriendly working conditions in Travel agencies

- **Payment delaying and cheating for the guide tips**
Most of the travel agencies take much time, even for 4 or 5 months, to settle the relevant charges of the tour guides. Therefore, the guides need their value for the service within some considerable time period.
In some cases, the tourists have paid for the tour package inclusive the guide tips to the tour operator in advanced. But those tour operators and travel agents cheat the guides by keeping it with them or sometimes give guide the half of the due amount.

- **Often tour operators use unlicensed guides to cut costs**
  This is very common practice by most of the small scale travel agencies to reduce their package cost. This will be a threat to the licensed tourist guides; facing unfair competition in the field. Unlicensed tourist guides with the lack of proper training and experience demonstrate the poor quality in service and damage the professionalism of tourist guides in whole.

- **Overpromise so as to sell the package**
  Some tour operators and travel agents tend to overpromise the tourists to sell the tour packages, however, when tourists arrive with high expectations, they are really disappointed. In some cases tourist guides are pressurized to take up assignments (especially in peak periods) for which they are not prepared or not experts in some special languages other than guiding in English.

In some cases, travel agencies overpromise and sell tour packages with a tight schedule; compact all the destination attractions to be visited within limited time period. In such cases tourists could have a glimpse of scenic spots; leading to dissatisfaction.

- **No power and rights of tour guides**
  Tourist guides would have to stick highly to the tour itinerary, and they cannot deviate it even the tourists may request. Therefore, the tourist guides don’t have any power and authority to do any simple changes without getting the permission of the relevant tour operators or travel agencies. This will lose the opportunity to do some extra mile for the clients.

- **Get last minute information**
  In some cases guides may receive the tour details in last minute which does not allows them opportunity to prepare, organize themselves for the assignment in well advanced and it may reduce the service quality. This is mostly happened to the guides who are permanently attached to the travel agencies as they get back to back tours without any time relief.

And also get last minute information about cancellations of tours by travel companies. This is badly affect for the freelance tourist guides as they lose other opportunities offered by other companies and lose both assignments.

- **Pressurize to visit particular shopping outlets**
  Travel agencies pressurise the tourists guides to patronise particular outlets and persuade tourists to visit those places. This is mostly happened in shopping with the aim of having the company commission. If the guides do not accompanying tourists to those suggested outlets, the guides, jobs are at stake because some travel agencies do not give the upcoming tours as their tourists haven’t done any purchases from those shopping outlets for the three past consecutive tours. This will indirectly pressurize the tourist guides in forcing their clients to shop in those outlets.

- **Problems in dealing with drivers**
  Some tourist guides have to face difficulties in dealing with the drivers. Some drivers argue with the guides in many cases especially in shopping commissions. Similarly the tourist guides also cheat the drivers in shopping commission.
5. Mitigating Strategies

The researchers suggest the following mechanisms to mitigate the identified problems and to enhance the service professionalism of the tourist guides in Sri Lanka.

5.1 Responsibilities of the government

- **a proper mechanism to demotivate unlicensed tourist guides**
  There are around 1400 licensed chauffeur guides and 1600 national guides however the amount may be double with the unlicensed tourist guides. The authorities must do their own share in saving the industry by making it mandatory for tour guides to have a valid license and that no person is allowed to operate as a tour guide without a valid license.

The SLTDA cannot control the issue alone and the Tourist Police should have a proper system to take actions against the unauthorized tourist guides and bring them before the law. Unfortunately, the Tourist Police lack the required numbers and trained personnel to provide the services. And also the Tourist Police have no powers over there; only an assistant director of the Tourism Development Authority has authority to make an arrest. The police could only escort such or higher-ranking officers. When the tourist police caught unlicensed tourist guide, they only get the required information filled to their database, and then advise him/her and relief and there is no any proper legal punishment. This is a loophole of the existing law. The researchers think it’s high time the laws be amended to give more powers to police.

Further, the SLTDA should have a proper mechanism to stop the hiring of unlicensed tourist guides by travel agencies in order to cut their package cost. When the tourist police catch the unlicensed tourist guides, the part of the offence committed by the tourist guides, goes to the travel agencies who appointed them to serve their clients without a valid license. Therefore, the relevant travel agency also should be punished legitimately.

- **Improve the Efficiency of the tourist guide training programme**
  It is identified the unlicensed tourist guides are more than the licensed guides in any category and the demand also increasing very rapidly due to rapid increase of the inbound tourists. However, authority and responsibility of the training of tour guides lies at SLTDA, however, they do not have capacity to fulfil the growing demand. Therefore, SLITHM’s guide training programmes and their procedures should be more efficient and should cope with industry requirements in order to facilitate for authorized tourist guides demand. As a solution the training responsibility of the tour guides can transfer to the provincial tourism ministries and the state universities who conduct tourism management degree programmes. However, it is essential to have a uniform syllabus and a teaching methodology.

- **Continuous monitoring of the performance of tourist guides**
  It’s necessary to have a proper monitoring of the tourist guides’ guiding practices even after they licensed from the SLTDA. The monitoring can be achieved through the guide license renewal process. It’s better to require a performance evaluation result sheet or a recommend letter from the particular travel agencies that they are working for in order to ensure the service quality.

- **Ensure the quality of guide accommodation and other facilities**
  According to the guidelines laid down by the SLTDA, a tourist guide accompanying a group of seven should be provided accommodation in the same hotel. The regulation has been made in view of the fact that most of the tourists feel at home and secure with a tourist guide being around. There had been occasions where some hotels housed tourist guides in places lesser in comfort and facilities. So
the government should do the spot investigations to check the quality of the guides’ accommodation facilities and fine the hoteliers those who not obey for their guidelines. Further, proper guidelines or regulations should be laid down for the chauffeur guides regarding the provision of accommodation rather than sending them to the nearest budget accommodation.

- **Appearance of tour guides & code of ethics**
  It is necessary to prescribe a suitable uniform for all the five categories of tourist guides then it will be able to distinguish them clearly. Also, it is necessary to have standards for physical appearance including personal hygiene. Further, should introduce codes of ethics for tour guides then it will help to solve most of the associated issues.

5.2 **Involvement of tour operators and travel agents**

- **Establishing Reasonable Salary System**
  Salary is a core factor which the tourist guides concerned more. Reasonable salary system is the best way to stop the “grey income” of tourist guides. Therefore, it is crucial to establish and enhance a reasonable salary system. Unreasonable salary system will greatly harm the enthusiasm of tourist guides in providing services. Therefore, establishing a reasonable and effective salary system is good for enhancing the service quality of guides. The company should set the basic salary of tourist guides according to their levels and work abilities. The payment should be differentiated according to the professional skills of the guides. The company should give a reasonable bonus for the tourist guides those who perform well and also have a good records and lengthy service period, with considering the feedback of tourists to encourage them to work harder.

- **Have a trust culture**
  Travel agents should have a good faith in dealing with tourist guides and give due respect for them. The travel agencies should settle the respective tour settlements without delaying and pay the virtual value for their service without cheating the guide tips and other commissions.

- **Give some reasonable degree of authority and power**
  Travel agents should give the tourist guides some reasonable degree of authority and power to cater to the clients’ emergency requirements and also for the situational handling. While on the tour, tourist guides may have limited power to take best decisions to satisfy the tourists’ needs. Therefore, the travel agencies should be more flexible and give some percentage of authority and power to cater to the clients requirements such as within the limited mileage, extra amount of money to purchase some goods for them and etc.

6. **Conclusion**

The tour guide as “the soul” of the tourism industry plays an essential role in the success of the sector by delivering high quality services. Working on the front line of tourism reception, 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 barometer for measuring overall success of the tourism industry.

When considering the role of tour guides in a Sri Lankan context, the proliferation of complaints documenting service quality issues and the unprofessional conduct of tourist guides constitutes a clear and unambiguous call for action. The researcher concludes that the tourist guides themselves have the core responsibility to improve their moral, intellectual and professional qualities to resolve problems stemming from patterns of individual misbehaviour, sub-standard abilities, and lack of service professionalism. The travel agents and hoteliers have corollary responsibilities to build a culture of trust, mutual respect and healthy business practices in dealing with tourist guides. Finally,
the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, with the help of Tourist Police, should develop and implement cost effective mechanisms to discourage unlicensed tour guides and associated malpractices. An efficient system of licensing though proper training and education is an important first step.

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