PEER-REVIEWED RESEARCH ARTICLE 2023, 5(1): 42-52 https://toleho.anadolu.edu.tr/

TOLEHO Journal of Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality

ANADOLU UNIVERSITY FACULTY OF TOURISM

WHAT MIGHT THEY ASK? TOURISTS' QUESTIONS DIRECTED TO TOUR GUIDES DUE TO THEIR INFORMATION-GIVER ROLE

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KEYWORDS

Tour Guiding
Tour Guides' Roles
Information-giver Role
Knowledge
Tourists' Questions

ABSTRACT

Interpretation is essential in tour guiding services and it is formed by tour guides' information. In this context, the body of the tour guiding literature has examined tour guides' information-giver role in various aspects. However, tourists' questions, as a component of tour guides' information-giver role are under-studied. Hence, this empirical research aims to identify tourists' questions directed to tour guides in Türkiye. It also examines tour guides' perceptions regarding tourists' characteristics and their questions. Additionally, tour guides' strategies to handle challenging questions were clarified. 13 tour guides were interviewed to conduct the qualitative research and the findings reveal that tourists' questions are related to Geography, Islam religion, History in Anatolia, Sociocultural settings, and Socioeconomic infrastructure in Türkiye. Therefore, this study contributes to the current body of knowledge as it offers a framework for tourists' questions, tour guides' relevant perceptions, and strategies. Finally, it provides recommendations for practitioners and policy-makers

1. INTRODUCTION

Tour guides interpret destinations on tours (Ap & Wong, 2001), and their information forms what they interpret (Cohen, 1985). Guided tours attract tourists due to tour guides' information on destinations (Overend, 2012). Information integrates tourists into the tour environment (Schmidt, 1979), thus leading tour guides to a crucial position beyond "translator" (Gelbman & Maoz, 2012). Likewise, tour guides are distinguished from the rest of staff in their information-giver role on tours. This role is their prime function, and tour guides show their expertise through it (Holloway, 1981). On the other hand, tour guides' information-giver role engages them in dialogues with tour participants, and they answer tourists' questions (Schlegel & Pfoser, 2021). Questions help tourists link the interpreted content to their experiences (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006); thus, the audience goes beyond passive listening (Best, 2012). Hence, tourists direct questions to their tour guides about various characteristics of a destination. These questions cover a wide spectrum of subjects (Al-Okaily, 2022; de Guzman, Magnayon, Manuel, Moratillo & Lim, 2019). Eventually, answering tourists' questions is an essential aspect of tour guiding services (Weiler & Walker, 2014).

Tour guides' interpretation has been subject to tour guiding studies. The effect of interpretation on tourist experience (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Io & Hallo, 2011, 2012), cultural identity and destination image (Cheng, Kuo, Chang & Chen, 2019), and tourist satisfaction (Jamaliah, Mgonja, Alazaizeh & Powell, 2021) are clarified in the tour guiding literature. Likewise, how tour guides' interpretation helps tourists comprehend cultural heritage (Weng, Liang & Bao, 2020) and explore their relationships with destinations (Wearing & Archer, 2002; Ababneh, 2018) are examined. Additionally, tour guides' interpretation is examined within the realm of conservation, sustainability (Hu & Wall, 2012), and destination loyalty (Kuo, Chang, Cheng & Lin, 2015). Also, tour guiding studies note that tour guides' interpretation mediates between tourists and destinations (Weiler & Yu, 2007; Williams, 2013). Regarding tour guides, Wong (2013) notes that tour guides adjust their interpretation to the countries of tourists.

In tour guiding literature, Holloway's (1981) seminal study emphasizes tour guides' information-giver role. In this context, information is identified as a component of tour guiding services which transforms into interpretation (Cohen, 1985). Tour guides' information is noted as a dimension of tour guides' performance which effects tourist satisfaction (Zhang & Chow, 2004; Sezgin & Düz, 2018). Furthermore, Dahles (2002) explains how tour guides' information functions, and some scholars (Ap & Wong 2001; Al-Okaily, 2022) define the features of information. Trustworthiness and information accuracy are emphasized to be crucial in tour guiding services (Chen, Hwang & Lee, 2006). On the other hand, tour guiding studies non-exhaustively discuss tourists' questions on tours. Tour guides' answerable attitude towards tourists' questions

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Received 4.5.2023; Received in revised form 15.05.2023; Accepted 17.05.2023

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e-ISSN: 2687 - 3737 / © 2021 The Authors. Published by Anadolu University.
https://doi.org/10.48119/toleho.1292447

is declared to be crucial for tour guiding services (Caber & Albayrak, 2016; Kalyoncu & Yuksek, 2017). Furthermore, tour guides' perceptions of questions (Holloway, 1981; Schlegel & Pfoser, 2021) and their hassles with challenging questions are identified in the literature (Zhu & Xu, 2021; Larsen & Meged, 2013). However, the context of tourists' questions is under-studied despite their prominent involvement with tour guides' information-giver role, thus tourist satisfaction.

To fulfill the gap in the literature, this study simply questions "What do they want to know?" and the research questions are as follows: (1) What are the questions tourists direct to tour guides on tours? (2) Do the questions depend on tourists' countries? (3) How do tour guides handle tourists' challenging questions? Nonetheless, service-related or practical questions such as "What time do we arrive at the hotel?" or "Where is the restroom?" are not subject to this study. Likewise, this study does not cover any personal questions directed to tour guides. In other words, this study handles the questions in the context of interpretations. On the other hand, this study acknowledges that destinations are determinative in tourists' questions, thus narrowing down the sample to tour guides in Türkiye. Eventually, this study contributes to the body of knowledge by revealing and classifying the questions directed to tour guides. Also, it explicates question-oriented interaction between tour guides and tourists. Additionally, the results can be referable for interpretation and information-related research in tour guiding studies. Finally, the results showcase implications for practitioners as they offer tour guides a comprehension of what tourists would like to know on tours. In this regard, tour guides can review their interpretations and knowledge of information according to the results of this study. Thus, they can enhance the context of their information and foresee tourists' expectations which will improve tour guiding service quality on tours. Likewise, based on this study's results, tour guiding departments in the universities can revise their curricula and The Ministry of Culture and Tourism can review the context of training courses. So that tour guides would be trained to be answerable tourists' questions in Türkiye.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Tour Guides' Information-giver Role

Tourists visit destinations to learn about a new culture. Therefore, learning practices on tours affect their experience quality in destinations (Altunel & Erkut, 2015). In this regard, tour guides' interpretations function to educate tourists (Chen, Hwang & Lee, 2006) and evoke their emotions for an extensive experience (Io & Hallo, 2012). Thus, interpretations provide tourists with an active and questioning mindset, thus helping them enhance their perceptions of the environment around them (Moscardo, 1996). For instance, in a historical setting, tour guides 'bring the past to life' through their interpretations (Williams, 2013) derived from accurate historical information (Io & Hallo, 2012). Hence, tour guides' interpretation helps tourists perceive cultural heritage values (Weng, Liang & Bao, 2020) and enhances their comprehension of destinations (Gelbman & Maoz, 2012). However, it is a reciprocal benefit since tour guides' interpretation significantly influences destination loyalty (Kuo, Chang, Cheng & Lin, 2015).

Tour guides interpretations cover a wide range of destination characteristics, such as local people, events, and objects (Tsaur & Teng, 2017). Besides the displayed environment, tour guides interpret the 'backstage' in their manners. Since tourists can barely interact with the locals, tour guides set examples of how locals eat, dress, or laugh (Touloupa, 2010). Thus, interpretation includes guides' daily life experiences (Tsaur & Teng, 2017) due to their ambassador role of their countries (Holloway, 1981). Likewise, tour guides relate their interpretations to tourists' lives, thus enhancing tourists' experience (Alazaizeh, Jamaliah, Mgonja & Ababneh, 2019) since interpretation turns tourists' visit into experience in destinations (Ap & Wong, 2001; Chang, Kung, & Luh, 2012). On the other hand, instead of standardized and generic content (Altunel & Erkut, 2015), interpretations should be flexible regarding various characteristics (Chen, Hwang & Lee, 2006) such as tourists' age, gender, and educational background (Kuo, Chang, Cheng & Lin, 2015).

Tour guides highlight and interpret destinations through their information, and it is an essential component of a professional service. Information determines to what extent tourists would learn about the culture (Hu & Wall, 2012) and comprehend the local sights in a destination (Dahles, 2002). Consequently, tourists are satisfied with the presence of a tour guide disseminating information to them (Arslanturk & Altunoz, 2012). In this context, tour guides cover information about history, geography (Cohen, Ifergan & Cohen, 2002), geology (Carmody, 2013), architecture (Mustafa, 2019), archaeology, religion, flora, and fauna (Chowdhary & Prakash, 2009). In addition, tour guides present specific information about the local culture (Al-Okaily, 2022), customs (Mossberg, 1995), and lifestyles of the host community (Huang, Hsu & Chan, 2009). Besides destination-based information, tour guides convey information about the host country's regime, polity (Hallin & Dobers, 2012), economic development, and position in the world (Weiler & Yu, 2007).

Disseminating accurate information to tourists is essential to professionalism in tour guiding (Holloway, 1981). Also, information should be necessary, up-to-date (Ap & Wong, 2001), clear, and understandable for tour participants (Al-Okaily, 2022). Clear and simple explanations in interpretation help reduce the gap between the knowledge of tour guides and tourists (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). Additionally, tour guides should disseminate their information in an interesting way (Holloway, 1981). On the other hand, tour participants pay attention to the trustworthiness of the information given in a guided tour (Chen, Hwang & Lee, 2006). When the conveyed information falls short of tourists' expectations, tour guides fail in their roles regarding cultural mediation (Weiler & Yu, 2007). Likewise, insufficient or incorrect information results in tourist dissatisfaction (Weiler, 2016) and trouble tour staff as well (Tsaur & Lin, 2014). Eventually, referencing during interpretation enhances the authority of tour guides and strengthens their image of having done research in various sources. Photographs, archived newspapers, letters, and official documents can be presented in a folder or computer to legitimate the information in

interpretation (Schlegel & Pfoser, 2021).

2.2. Tourists' Questions on Guided Tours

Tourists ask questions to learn about the culture and religion of the host community (Al-Okaily, 2022; Travesi, 2017). Likewise, animals, flowers (Hurombo, Kwanisai & Mutanga 2022), paintings, sculptures, rituals, cultural heritage (de Guzman, Magnayon, Manuel, Moratillo & Lim, 2019), and food (Seyitoğlu, 2021) can be subject to tourists' questions. Questions about the visited site or attractions indicate tourists' interest in the tour (Çınar & Toksöz, 2020). Therefore, the presence of questions is an indicator of a successful excursion from the tour guides' perspective (Holloway, 1981). Hence, tour guides prefer that their customers ask questions rather than sit silently (Schlegel & Pfoser, 2021). Therefore, tour guides can use tourists' questions as a doorway to new content of narratives (Salazar, 2006). Once tourists raise a question, tour guides steer their interpretation to a new course and convey further information (Gelbman & Maoz, 2012). Eventually, tourists' questions give tour guides clues about what to interpret on tours.

Tourists expect their guides to fully answer their questions (Liu, Li, & Sheng, 2021). Also, quick answers are expected. Thus, tour guides' responsiveness is essential in tours (Chen, Hwang & Lee, 2006). A tour guide answering questions will awaken positive emotions, thus leading to repurchasing tourism services (Kuo, Chang, Cheng & Lin, 2015). On the other hand, unanswered questions result in complaints (Avcı & Doğan, 2018). Tour guides' answers are expected to be sufficient within the realm of tour quality (Kara & Demir, 2021). Unsatisfying answers put tour guides on the spot and lead them to embarrassment (Zhu & Xu, 2021). Furthermore, tour guides find themselves in an awkward position when there are knowledgeable participants in particular (Holloway, 1981). In these cases, a tourist might take the stage and answer the question, thus stealing the tour guide's thunder (Larsen & Meged, 2013). Besides, tour operators expect their guides to answer tourists' questions. In their perception, tour guides' vague answers damage the reputation of tour operators (Çakmak & Kurnaz, 2020). Eventually, delivering inaccurate information, such as distorted history, harms the image of the destination country (Jo, Lee, Kim & Lee, 2020).

Tourists from different nations have various levels of interest in history (Wong, 2013). Tour guides perceive tourists' nationalities as determinative of their interest in the tour, thus their tendency to ask questions (Gelbman & Collins-Kreiner, 2018). In tour guides' perception, tourists' questions might reflect their stereotypes and prejudices (Touloupa, 2010). In such cases, tour guides avoid potential conflicts by interpreting general phrases and by concealing their personal views. Likewise, they handle delicate questions by sparing time for the tourist who asked the question and sharing their subjective views in person. On the other hand, some questions are hard to answer, especially when there is a lack of reliable information to present (Schlegel & Pfoser, 2021).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Data Collection

This research conducts an exploratory inquiry into international tourists' questions in Türkiye. Therefore, it adopts a qualitative approach to provide comprehension of the subject. Face-to-face interviews were conducted for data collection since interviews help researchers clarify the research issues (Arksey & Knight, 1999). Interview questions were formulated in a semi-structured form based on the literature. Such as what can be subject to tourists questions due to tour guides' information-giver role (Holloway, 1981), how tourists questions lead tour guides to interpret details (Gelbman & Maoz, 2012; Salazar, 2006), and how tour guides relate tourists' questions to their characteristics (Wong, 2013; Touloupa, 2010). Later, the questions were sent to an academic in the tour guiding department (with a tour guiding license and experience) and an experienced tour guide to ensure clarity (Patton, 1987). Hence, the questions were revised. In this regard, the question "Is there a specific subject that tourists ask you to explain?" was added to the form. Likewise, the question "What do tourists do when they are un/satisfied of your answer?" was changed to "How do tourists react when they are un/satisfied of your answer?" for clarity. Then, a pilot interview was conducted to test the questions' sufficiency (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). Tour guides who guide international tourists in Türkiye compose the sample. Hence, the snowball sampling method was used, thus personal networks and the recommendations of the interviewed tour guides were determinative in reaching the sample. Furthermore, the maximum variation sampling was adopted to ensure the participation of tour guides working with different nationalities. In the meantime, a sample variation was ensured regarding tour guides' age, experience, and foreign language. The interviews were conducted in Nevşehir (a province in Cappadocia destination) and Eskişehir province due to the accessibility to the interviewed tour guides since personal networks and the recommendations determined the sample. However, the participants guide international tourists across the country throughout the year, so their residential addresses are non-decisive.

The participants were briefed about the study before interviews and assured confidentiality of their personal information. The participants allowed audio-record so the tapes could be analyzed later. 13 tour guides were interviewed between 06.09.2016-17.09.2016 and 17.04.2023-03.05.2023. In qualitative research, there is no consensus on the sample size, and purposeful selection makes even one case the sample of a research (Patton, 2002). In this regard, data saturation is the reference for sample size (Mak, Wong & Chang, 2010; Tsaur & Lin, 2014, 2019), and it is sufficient when data provides no new information or themes (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). Likewise, in qualitative tour guiding research, studies conducting interviews (Ap & Wong, 2001; Mak, Wong & Chang, 2011; Jo, Lee, Kim & Lee, 2020) achieved data saturation within the range of 10-15. In this study, data saturation was achieved after interviewing 12 tour guides, and no new information emerged from the last participant. Finally, due to ethical considerations, tour guides' personal information was kept confidential and, they were coded TG1, TG2, TG3…

3.2. Participant Characteristics

The participants' average age is 44 (the youngest 33 and the eldest: 66). The average tour guiding

experience is 20 years. The interviewed tour guides speak English, German, Japanese, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, and Dutch as their foreign language(s) for tour guiding service. Due to their foreign languages, they guide a wide range of tourists from different geographical origins. All the participants work as freelance tour guides and are paid daily wages on tours. Table 1 demonstrates the characteristics of the interviewees.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Tour Guide	Gender	Age	Language(s)	Experience (Year)	Occupation Type
TG1	Male	37	German	15	Freelance
TG2	Male	49	English, German	30	Freelance
TG3	Male	38	English, Japanese	18	Freelance
TG4	Male	33	English, Spanish, Portuguese	11	Freelance
TG5	Male	33	English	6	Freelance
TG6	Male	50	English	27	Freelance
TG7	Male	38	English	13	Freelance
TG8	Male	45	English, Russian	11	Freelance
TG9	Male	51	English	32	Freelance
TG10	Male	66	English	41	Freelance
TG11	Male	50	Dutch	24	Freelance
TG12	Male	40	English, Spanish	15	Freelance
TG13	Female	47	German	17	Freelance

3.3. Data Analysis

The audio records were analyzed employing NVivo12 software since it enables researchers to conduct their data and provides a focus on the meaning of it (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Adopting a qualitative descriptive approach, this study initially conducted content analysis since it is an efficient method for data analysis (Cavanagh, 1997) when a concise and inclusive description is aimed (Tsaur & Lin, 2014). In this regard, content analysis is a commonly applied method in tour guiding studies (Hu & Wall, 2013; Mackenzie & Kerr, 2013; Mak et al., 2011). Hence, the data were coded through listening twice, and later thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012) -as recommended (Kassarjian, 1977; Tsaur & Lin, 2014)- was executed to classify the questions directed to tour guides (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Later, two academics in the tour guiding department (with tour guiding licenses and experience) reviewed the codes, categories, and themes; thus external auditor was provided to prevent potential bias (O'Connell, Cook, Gerkovich & Potocky, 1990). Hence, the findings were finally revised and identified.

3.4. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness indicates validity and reliability in qualitative research (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). This study adopts Lincoln and Guba's (1985) strategy as it is commonly employed by tour guiding studies (Ap & Wong, 2001; Jo, Lee, Kim & Lee, 2020; de Guzman, Magnayon, Manuel, Moratillo & Lim, 2019; Mackenzie & Kerr, 2013) to assure trustworthiness. Therefore, the interviewer had a random talk with the participants before each interview to provide a comfortable environment for interaction. A pilot test was conducted to ensure trustworthiness Academics with tour guiding licenses and experience were included as external data auditors since it is a strategy to enhance trustworthiness in qualitative studies (Mhyre, 2010). Thus, the data were revised and clarified to ensure peer review (Merriam, 2009). Finally, the results were shown to two other experienced tour guides to ensure that they were meaningful and consistent with their experiences (Shenton, 2004).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Tourists' Questions Directed to Tour Guides

Adopting a descriptive qualitative research, the data was organized and described to determine the quotations in the interviews. Later, tourists' questions were identified and categorized due to thematic units. The frequency of the codes was used as a base to ensure consistency and avoid any potential bias caused by tour guides' self-report. Thus, only the codes repeated by at least two tour guides were taken into consideration. Later, the codes were transformed into categories. At this stage, predetermined categories can be used or new categories can emerge (Dawson, 2016). Therefore, the existing body of knowledge in tour guiding studies (Al-Okaily, 2022; de Guzman, Magnayon, Manuel, Moratillo & Lim, 2019; Travesi, 2017; Hurombo, Kwanisai & Mutanga 2022; Seyitoğlu, 2021) was utilized determining the categories. The results reveal five subjects to tourists' questions: Geography, Islam religion, History in Anatolia, Sociocultural settings, and Socioeconomic infrastructure. Table 2 demonstrates the subjects to tourists' questions and their frequency repeated by different tour guides.

Table 2: Thematic Units of Tourists' Questions Directed to Tour Guides)

Thematic Units of Tourists' Questions Directed to Tour Guides					
Themes	**Geography**	**Islam Religion**	**History in Anatolia**	**Sociocultural Settings**	**Socioeconomic Infrastructure**
Categories and Codes	**Agricultural Products** Products nationwide (4) Products in Mediterranean Region (2) **Flora and Fauna** Tree species (4) Plant species (3) Flower species (3) Bird species (2)	**Religious Practises** Funerals (4) Circumcision (3) Hijab (Headscarf) (2) Separate areas in mosques for women and men (2) **The Azan (Call to Prayer)** The function of the Azan (4) The meaning of the Azan (2) Frequency of the Azan recitation in a day (2)	**Ancient Settlements** Construction of pillars (2) Transportation of pillars (2) Life in caves (2) Heating in caves (2) Deformation in cave frescoes (2) **The Minorities** Turkish-Armenian Controversy (5) Exchange of Turkish and Greek populations (2)	**Culinary Culture** Eating and drinking habits (4) Turkish Cuisine (3) Ingredients of Turkish cuisine (2) **Weddings** Wedding customs (6) Wedding convoys (2) **Family and Women** Dating (4) Polygyny (4) Women's role in the society (4) Women's rural dressing (2) Turkish family structure (2)	**Education** School fees (4) Education system (3) **Employment** Occupations in the country (2) Minimum wage (2) Retirement system (2)

4.1.1. Geography

According to the results, tourists ask questions about the geographical characteristics of the destination visited, and it is coherent with the literature noting tour guides' interpretation cover geography (Cohen, Ifergan & Cohen, 2002; Chowdhary & Prakash, 2009). Tourists' questions about agricultural products are related to the regions and the country. The interviewed tour guides stated that tourists' questions about agriculture raise upon their observations during tours. On the other hand, tourists are curious about the flora and fauna of Türkiye as they travel throughout the country. Tourists' interest in flora and fauna has been observed for centuries in Anatolia (Kaya & Yetgin, 2021). Thus, they raise questions and ask their tour guides to disseminate knowledge about the trees, plants, flowers, and birds around them. The examples of tour guides' expressions are as follows:

They see a verdant field and ask, "What is it?". You do not know if it is barley or wheat that the farmer sowed in Konya. You just look at the field and yet, you are too far away. They ask this a lot (TG7)

The questions I do not know the answers to are generally the names of flowers. "What is this flower? What is that flower?". Most tour guides dislike these questions. Because it requires expertise. Of course, everyone knows hyacinth, tulip, or rose, but you are walking, and tourists ask about a flower that you

have seen for the first time in your life: "What is this flower?" (TG3)

4.1.2. Islam Religion

Tourists seek information about the host community's religion and direct questions to their guides (Al-Okaily, 2022; Travesi, 2017). In Türkiye, tourists' questions are related to the religious practices of Islam and the Azan (call to prayer). TG6 noted that "Asians ask about the funeral: 'Do you bury or cremate the dead?'". Likewise, circumcision, as TG5 declares, is a matter of tourists' curiosity on tours: "Circumcision, for example, is asked about too often. They already hear it from the Muslims back home. They ask what it is, when it is done and whether it is healthy". In addition, hijab and praying practices in mosques are the subjects that tourists ask for information about on tours.

Especially when entering The Blue Mosque, they ask about the covering practices of Muslims. "Why can men or women not wear this or that? Why not? Why is it a sin? Why do women wear a headscarf while men do not?" (TG12)

According to the results, tourists hear the Azan during their stay in Türkiye. They ask their guides about the function and the meaning of the Azan and ask for information about its daily recitation frequency.

They ask too many questions about Islam. One of the most frequent questions is about the Azan: "Why is it recited five times? What does the Azan say?". It is a typical question, and tourists from every country ask about it, at least its meaning. They certainly hear it. It is recited next to their hotel (TG9)

4.1.3. History in Anatolia

History is essential to tour guides' interpretations because inaccurate information damages destinations' image (Jo, Lee, Kim & Lee, 2020). In this context, tour guides' interpretations play a crucial role in ancient cities (Kavak, 2020). The results indicate that tourists visiting Türkiye are curious about the country's history. Hence, they ask their guides for information about the structures in the ancient settlements. In addition to buildings, historical events are subject to the tourists' questions. In this context, the interviewed tour guides note that tourists' questions about the ancient settlements reflect their sense of wonder regarding the technical possibilities of the ancient world.

They ask such questions: "How the pillars was constructed at that time?". Well, we are talking about the ancient times, before Christ. "How were they built? How were they lifted? How were they brought here?", "The technic was limited back then. How could they form and decorate the marble? How could the pillars resist the earthquakes?". Such reasonable questions raise from the groups. (TG1).

Since Cappadocia is one of the most visited destinations in Türkiye (yigm.ktb.gov.tr, 2022; data.tuik.gov.tr, 2022), the cave structures in the region arouse curiosity on tours. Tourists ask questions to learn whether people still live in the caves today, as noted by TG6 "The question 'Is there anyone still living in the caves?' are asked too often". Likewise, the heating conditions of the cave structures are another subject to tourists' questions, as stated by TG4 "They ask how the caves were heated". Finally, the deformation on the frescoes from the Eastern Roman Empire Period is observed by tourists and followed by questions, as TG9 exemplifies "They specifically ask about the deformation in the figures' eyes. The eyes scratched out, and tourists ask if it is related to Islam and whether it is an act against Christianity".

4.1.4. Sociocultural Settings

Tour guides' information is decisive in tourists' experience of understanding a culture (Hu & Wall, 2012). Hence, it covers information about the local culture (Al-Okaily, 2022), and lifestyles (Huang, Hsu & Chan, 2009). In this regard, Türkiye's sociocultural settings are subject to tourists' questions. Tourists ask questions about the local food and cuisine practices of Türkiye as TG1 declares: "They are so curious about our cuisine. They ask how the food is made and what the ingredients are. They ask in the restaurant or after lunch. Sometimes in tours, we visit kitchens as well". As a part of the culture, 'wedding customs' were repeated by six interviewed tour guides, thus showing tourists ask questions about Turkish weddings, as TG3 points out: "They ask if the weddings are held in mosques. Because as we interpret marriage, we mention religious marriage ceremony. However, we do not go to a mosque, and the imam comes home. Tourists think people go to a mosque to get married". Additionally, tourists ask questions about families, women's roles, and dress in Turkish society, as exemplified by TG2: "About women, they ask about the economic welfare level of women, their rights, and their role in the society. They ask, "Where do women stand in your social life?".

4.1.5. Socioeconomic Infrastructure

According to the results, tourists want to learn about education and employment in Türkiye. In this context, tourists ask whether education is mandatory and free of charge. TG9 notes: "They ask questions about education. Compulsory education, 'How many years do the kids have to go to school? Is it co-education or not?'. They are curious about compulsory education". TG1 notes the questions about the minimum wage: "Minimum wage is asked too often. They ask 'What is the minimum wage?'". Eventually, these questions are coherent with the literature pointing out that tourists ask questions about the housing prices and salaries of the host community (Zhu & Xu, 2021). By answering these questions, tour guides convey information about the host country's economic development (Weiler & Yu, 2007).

4.2. Tourists' Characteristics and Their Questions

Wong (2013) and Gelbman and Collins-Kreiner (2018) notes nationality as a determinative in tourists' interest in history and tendency to ask questions. In this study, the results showcase that tour guides do not have a consensus in their perceptions of tourists' geographic origin as a determinative in questions. To exemplify, TG9 states, "The French ask political questions. The Europeans ask political questions. They know the up-to-date news". On the other hand, tourists' questions are perceived to depend upon their socioeconomic status and occupation as TG10 states, "It is tourists' background that makes them ask questions. For example, a farmer ask about farming, a historian ask about history, a businessman asks about the industry". Therefore, the findings showcase that besides nationality Wong

(2013), tourists' other characteristics play a role in tour guides' interpretation preferences. Eventually, TG8 tells an anecdote during the interviews and explains how tourists' characteristics can steer their interpretation to a new course.

We were on tour in Ephesus, İzmir. The man (tourist) does not listen to a word as I say "Celsus", "Brothel", and "Atrium". Then I asked, "What is your job?". He is a truck driver. Then I started to talk about truck brands and had his attention. I started to talk about the truck drivers in Türkiye. There are many truck drivers in Hatay (a southern Turkish province). I interpreted how they got unemployed during the Gulf War, leading them to depression. The truck drivers were home for a long time, so there was a baby boom! He started to laugh because he could think about himself (TG8).

4.3. Tour Guides' Strategies to Handle Challenging Questions

According to the results, tour guides follow some strategies to handle the challenging questions on tours. Firstly, the interviewed tour guides reveal that some questions can be tough to answer due to the lack of knowledge. In this regard, TG7 explains how he preannounces that tourists should not expect him to answer every question:

I found the solution to that. "I am not Google. It is impossible to know about every tree. There are more than a thousand tree species in Türkiye. If a tree is important in history, we already introduce it, but I cannot recognize all the trees" (TG7).

Tour guides were noticed to follow another strategy to deal with the tough questions: answering them later. TG12 states, "If I do not know the answer, I slide over, or if I would have more time with the group, I say, 'I will learn in this evening and explain it tomorrow'".

Schlegel and Pfoser (2021) note that tourists' questions can be delicate. Even further, Becker (2018) states that some questions can be provocative and might reflect tourists' prejudices (Touloupa, 2010). The results reveal that some questions can be delicate regarding international disputes. TG10 explains how he responds to these types of questions on tours:

I do not answer some questions on purpose. For example, Turkish-Armenian Controversy. I interpret superficially on the subject. If I notice the tourist digging it up and has a political motivation, I would say, "I am a tour guide. My formation concerns tourism, foreign language, history, art, and mythology. It is a political subject, and I have already explained what I know as a Turkish citizen. If you want to learn more about it, you can read books" (TG10).

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Tour guides' information-giver role have been extensively examined in the literature. However, tourists' questions, as an essential component of tour guide-tourist interaction, have been under-studied. Therefore, this study showcases tourists' questions directed to tour guides in Türkiye. Additionally, it offers an insight into tour guides' perceptions of the relationship between tourists' characteristics and their questions. Finally, it examines tour guides' strategies for handling challenging questions. This study contributes to the body of knowledge as it identifies the content of tourists' questions which were overlooked in the tour guiding literature. Hence, this study differs from the previous research as it explicates and categorizes tourists' questions. On the other hand, this study reveals that tour guides perceive tourists' socioeconomic status and occupations as a determinant in their questions besides their geographic origins. Eventually, this study notifies that tour guides adopt some strategies to handle the challenging questions on tours.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

In Türkiye, tourists ask questions about Geography, Islam religion, History in Anatolia, Sociocultural settings, and Socioeconomic infrastructure. Anatolia is a vast environment with numerous civilizations in its history. Therefore, tourists' questions cover a wide range of subjects which requires tour guides to be knowledgeable. On the other hand, the results indicate that tourists ask questions upon their observations on tours. Likewise, tourists' experiences, such as hearing the Azan five times a day during their stay in Türkiye, emerge as questions. Observation and experience-based questions can be spontaneous and challenging for the tour guides if they do not have the answers. Additionally, some questions related to social practices may not be subject to training curricula in universities and courses. Wedding convoys or couples' dating are two examples of these questions, and they can be learnt through observation and experience. The results reveal that observation and experience are two information sources for tour guides as coherent with the findings of Lugosi and Bray (2008) and Tsaur and Teng (2017). Therefore, a single moment in tour guides' lives might come up as a question or transform into an answer later. Eventually, tour guides receive questions about the school fees, education system, minimum wage, and retirement system in Türkiye. These questions require up-to-date answers, and tour guides can be answerable only if they check the latest information from time to time.

The results indicate that tourists' socioeconomic status and occupation are decisive in their questions. In this context, tourists' geographic origins Wong (2013) or characteristics, such as age, gender, and education (Kuo, Chang, Cheng & Lin, 2015), are not the merely references to their questions. Therefore, it is essential for tour guides to understand their customers from different perspectives. Thus, they can foresee tourists' expectations and interpret necessary information to attract their interest. In this context, this study showcases that the idea of tourist-standardization does not work in all circumstances. On the other hand, tour guides need to handle some questions with care since they may suffer from the lack of knowledge or delicate situations. The results showcase that tour guides honestly preannounce that they may not be able to answer all the questions due to lack of knowledge and search for the answers to inform their customers later. However, some questions regarding international or political disputes are beyond tour guides' expertise and can be challenging for them. Besides, some tourists might have strict political views (Quinn & Ryan, 2016) or prejudices (Touloupa, 2010). Therefore, all the diversity in tours requires selective and sensitive interpretation. Hence, tour guides do not provide extensive answers in case of delicate questions and interpret in general phrases, which is coherent with the findings of Schlegel & Pfoser (2021). At last,

tour guiding involves emotional labor (Alrawadieh & Dincer, 2021), and tour guides struggle to answer delicate questions.

5.2. Managerial Implications

Today, the presence of tourists is crucial for destinations since a variety of factors such as the pandemic (Doğru, McGinley, Sharma, Isık & Hanks, 2023) and uncertainty in economies (Işık, Sirakaya-Turk & Ongan, 2020) affect the tourism demand. Therefore, tourism stakeholders should appreciate tourist demand more than ever and ensure service quality to sustain tourism revenue. In tour guiding services, understanding tourists' needs and foreseeing their expectations can be a key to ensure service quality. So, this study showcases how tourists' questions play an essential role in tour guiding services. Tour guides' competencies and efficiency to answer tourists' questions is a must-do for tourist satisfaction. Consequently, policy-makers for tour guiding services should take actions to amend tour guides' competencies to be answerable to tourists' questions so that tour guides can play their part for a sustainable tourism development.

Schlegel and Pfoser (2021) emphasize that classifying the information and determining what to convey prevents tour guides from disseminating irrelevant content. Hence, this study provides tour guides with a framework for tourists' questions so that they know what to interpret on tours. Based on this study's results, tour guides can review their interpretations and knowledge of information to amend their guiding services. Likewise, Black and Ham (2005) indicate that tour guide training should provide skills, including knowledge, for the candidates. Therefore, the universities and The Ministry of Culture and Tourism can revise their training curricula and train candidate tour guides to be answerable to tourists' questions in Türkiye. Eventually, as Jacobson and Robles (1992) note, policy-makers should consider the needs of tour guides regarding information, and tourists' questions can be referred to identify tour guides' needs for interpretation.

Tour guides are directed various questions during tours, and some questions are challenging. Despite the challenges, providing answers to tourists' questions is crucial for tour guiding services. Thus it requires expertise and communication skills. Therefore, tour guides should be aware of tourists' potential emotional reactions when preparing their interpretations, as noted by Buzova, Sanz-Blas and Cervera-Taulet (2022). On the other hand, as Dahles (2002) argues, tour guides' narratives can be a reflection of the official policies. Tour guiding legislation in Türkiye does not steer tour guides to any course of interpretation but draws a framework for the profession. Tour Guiding Profession Law No. 6326 states that tour guiding service involves introducing the country's heritage in accordance with the politics of The Ministry of Culture and Tourism (www.mevzuat.gov.tr, 2012). Hence, tour guides should handle questions with care and consider the official legislations during their interpretations.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

This study acknowledges some limitations. Firstly, the maximum variation sample was conducted during the sample selection, and tour guides operating in seven languages were involved in the sample. Also, English-speaking tour guides in the sample operate for tourists from different countries regardless of tourists' native language. However, tour guides in Türkiye are officially registered in 38 different foreign languages (tureb.org.tr, 2023), and this study's findings might be limited to the tourists who speak the languages of the sample. Hence, future research can interview tour guides speaking other foreign languages to enhance the variety of tourists. After all, it is not feasible to identify every question tourists have ever asked. Thus, this study draws a framework for the subject. Secondly, personal networks and recommendations determined the sample, so the number of female tour guides happened to be limited. There is no guarantee that tour guides' gender is decisive in tourists' questions. Yet, it is brought to the attention of future researchers to look out for gender distribution. Also, future research can examine tourists' questions in other countries so that some comparisons can be provided. Likewise, the questions of Turkish tourists in domestic tours can be explored, and the perspectives of domestic and international tourists can be explicated within the realm of questions. Additionally, future research can conduct various data collection methods, such as participant observation, to enhance data. Finally, interviewing tourists themselves to reveal their questions might enhance the results.

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