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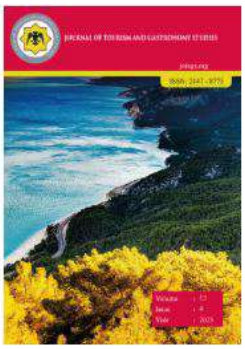

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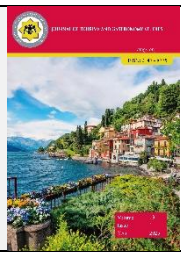

The Role of Tour Guides in Sustainable Tourism Practices

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Abstract

Tour guides are important tourism stakeholders who undertake roles in transferring tourism to future generations, using resources efficiently, minimising the destruction of natural areas and ensuring sustainability in tourism. Based on this, the main purpose of the study is to determine the roles of tour guides within the scope of their tours regarding the socio-cultural, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable tourism. In addition to the main goal of the study, the aim is to uncover the practices of tour guides on tours and their awareness of sustainable tourism. The research data were collected from a total of twenty-six participants working as tour guides between 5 March-16 April, 2024, through an e-interview form. The deductive thematic analysis of the data obtained in the research was carried out using the MAXQDA 2024 software program. As a result of the research, it was revealed that tour guides undertake various roles such as educator/instructor, environmental protector/ protector, and economic promoter regarding sustainable tourism. Tour guides stated that they care about protecting the natural environment of the regions visited on tours and that they are role models for tour participants in this regard. It has been determined that tour guides fulfill practices; preventing damage to historical sites, archaeological remains and findings, and the texture of the place in the socio-cultural dimension of sustainable tourism. They encourage the purchase of handicrafts and natural agricultural products produced by locals in the economic dimension, and warn people not to smoke in archaeological ruins in the environmental dimension. Tour guides' suggestions for sustainable tourism practices include organizing online or hands-on seminars.

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INTRODUCTION

With the impact of globalization, sustainable tourism practices have gained importance for the continuity of the tourism industry in recent years (Sevinç & Duran, 2018; Düz, 2022). Factors such as the increase in the world population, overuse of natural resources, deterioration of the environment, and limited energy resources have revealed the importance of sustainability practices. Sustainable tourism is an approach that adopts the principle of environmental, social and economic sustainability of tourism activities. This approach aims to ensure the sustainability of the tourism sector by protecting the natural, cultural and historical values of different tourism destinations, supporting the participation of local people and contributing economically to the region (Tankuş et al., 2023).

The main objectives of sustainable tourism are to minimise the harmful effects of tourism and to carry it into the future by ensuring the most efficient use of socio-cultural, economic and environmental resources. In this respect, the importance of sustainability in tourism is increasing. The World Tourism Organisation and the World Federation of Guides Association declared 2017 as the 'International Year of Sustainable Tourism' (Tătar et al., 2018). In order to achieve real sustainability in tourism, everyone in the sector has a significant share (Yüksek et al., 2019; Kavak & Emir, 2022). Tour guides are among the tourism stakeholders who interact directly with both visitors and local people in the tourism sector and are closest to tourist resources (Çapar & Yenipınar, 2017). Thanks to the information provided by the tour guide, tourists can exhibit responsible actions and develop environmentally sensitive behaviour (Randall & Rollins, 2005; Tetik, 2017), learn how to use the resources of the destination, and contribute economically to the local community (Hu, 2007).

Tour guides are seen by visitors as representatives or ambassadors of the tourist region as well as protectors. On the other hand, tour guides not only fulfil their professional obligations, but also feel the need to warn tourists to prevent any kind of damage by considering the environmental, economic, socio-cultural dimensions and to set an example to tourists with their behaviour (Rabotić, 2010). At the Development Summit organised by the United Nations General Assembly and member states in 2015, the goals planned to be achieved by 2030 were determined. Sustainable development goals consist of seventeen goals (Tankuş et al., 2023). Therefore, tour guides should not only be limited to contributing to the success of the tourism sector, but also take on more comprehensive roles to support the development of a sustainable tourism and contribute to sustainable development goals.

It is important to investigate which practices tour guides perform and which roles they undertake to contribute to sustainable tourism's economic, socio-cultural and environmental dimensions. Based on this, the study's main purpose is to determine the roles of tour guides within the scope of the tours they undertake regarding the socio-cultural, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable tourism. In addition to the study's main purpose, it was attempted to determine the practices of tour guides on tours and their awareness of sustainable tourism.

Literature

The Roles of Tour Guides

A tour guide is a person who accompanies, guides, provides information and promotes places of visit, and helps to make sense of the socio-cultural and economic perceptions of the visitors (Ahipaşaoğlu, 2001; Düz, 2017; Kaya & Yetgin, 2021). In today's tourism, expectations for the tour guide have increased over time, and visitors have now

moved beyond an operational guidance service that only describes the route during the tour process, guides the way, and conveys standard information such as the history, and the human and geographical structure of the region or structures in the programme. Tourists now tend to be more interested in interactional guiding that plays a role in the holistic understanding and assimilation of the culture visited and experienced, as well as the history and stories mentioned in the narratives, and in stimulating positive emotions in the mind (Moscardo, 1998; Weiler & Ham, 2002; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006).

In this context, tour guides are individuals who have a significant impact on shaping the behaviour of visitors with their role performance in ensuring the sustainability of tourism (Alazaizeh et al., 2019). In addition to their extensive knowledge and ability to represent culture, tour guides undertake various roles towards tourists, the country and the local community, the public, local culture, the environment and nature. Research on the roles of tour guides dates back to the late 1970s (Tetik Dinç & Güdü Demirbulat, 2019). In review the studies in the literature were examined, classifications from belonging to different authors were found. Within the scope of this study, the main roles of tour guides are identified as an educator/instructor role, a manager/leader role, a cultural ambassador/representative role, an environmental protector/protector role, an entertainer/enjoyer role and an economic promoter role.

Educator/instructor role: This means that the tour guide provides information regarding the region and promotes it. The information given by tour guides in regard to the region consists of three areas: tour and route, distance, travel time, local facilities; behavioural information to change the behaviour of visitors in the region, to guide them, and to determine the rules to be followed; and educational information to give historical, geographical, cultural and human information regarding the region (Hu, 2007; Yetgin, 2017; Asmadili, Asmadili & Yüksek, 2018).

Manager/leader role: The tour guide is the person responsible for every stage of the tour, such as implementing the tour programme and providing information from the beginning to the end of the tour (Köroğlu, 2019). The leader role of the tour guide is stated as the person who organises, manages a tour, provides access, and holds the control mechanism. The tour guide who assumes a leader role is the person who knows the direction, access to the destination, team knowledge and safety, and maintains harmony within the group (Cohen, 1985). In other words, it refers to providing control and guiding tourists by recognising them throughout the tour (Pond, 1993; Yetgin, 2017; Kalyoncu & Yüksek, 2017).

Cultural ambassador/representative role: The cultural ambassador role was first mentioned in the literature by Cohen (1985). The representative role of the tour guide refers to representing the region, the country and the travel agency he/she works for to tourists. In addition to this, he/she has the role of representing the tourists to whom he/she provides guidance services against the external environment in social, economic and environmental terms (Ahipaşaoğlu, 2001; Batman, 2003; Zhang & Chow, 2004).

Environmental protector/protector role: The environmental protection role refers to the fact that tour guides encourage tourists to behave responsibly in order to prevent damage to the region they visit and to spread this behaviour over a long period of time, to minimise environmental pollution, and to encourage the use of renewable energy sources (Hu, 2007). By assuming this role, tour guides should try to set an example to the participants with their environmental sensitivity, knowledge and behaviour (Köroğlu, 2013). In addition, it is emphasised that tour guides will reduce the negative effects of guests on wildlife by providing preliminary information on how to behave towards wildlife and the environment. Failure to manage and inform tourists correctly may cause possible damage to

the environment (Taylı, 2003). The protective role is both the protection against possible dangers to tourists and the protection of the tourist region (Yetgin, 2017; Yetgin Akgün, 2020). In addition, the tour guide feels the obligation to protect the environment in which he/she works and lives, as well as the need to personally warn tourists when their behaviour is inadequate and harmful to the environment (Rabotić, 2010).

The role of entertainer/enjoyer: This refers to the fact that tour guides distract tourists from the routine and make them feel positive emotions, ensuring that tourists have a pleasant time with enjoyable activities and animation activities throughout their travels (Heung, 2008; Toker, 2011; Yetgin, 2017). In this context, tour guides should have qualities such as knowing how to entertain, being extroverted and sociable, and being humorous while undertaking the role of entertaining/having a good time (Ahipaşoğlu, 2001). The tour guide could tell funny stories and jokes while interacting with tourists according to the situation and functioning of the tour (Tsaur & Teng, 2017). Therefore, this can ensure that the tour takes place in a fun atmosphere.

Economic promoter: This role refers to protecting tourism resources economically and providing advice to support the local economy. By establishing the connection between tourists and local people, the tour guide also helps tourists to buy products produced by local people (Ormsby & Mannle, 2006: Çapar & Yenipınar, 2017). It can be said to be of vital importance in increasing the welfare of the host community through the promotion of economic development in tourism, taking into account the needs and benefits of hosts, guests, regional resources and industry (Hu, 2007; Rabotić, 2010).

Sustainable Tourism and its Dimensions

Sustainable tourism is defined by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) as 'tourism that meets the needs of visitors, industry, the environment and the local host community, while taking full account of the economic, social and environmental impact of existing resources now and in the future' (UNEP & WTO, 2005). A sustainable tourism approach aims to protect and utilise natural, socio-cultural and economic resources in the future while providing benefits to the current society. Development in tourism involves providing long-term products without damaging the existing resources of countries (Demir & Çevirgen, 2006). In order for the tourism development of countries to proceed systematically, long-term sustainable goals should be determined by ensuring the support of all participants. Therefore, in order to ensure sustainability in tourism, it is necessary to reveal the environmental, economic or socio-cultural dimensions.

Environmental Dimension: In order to provide the needs of people, all resources are obtained from the natural environment, as well as providing energy from natural ecological systems and transforming substances into economic waste can only be provided from natural resources. Therefore, environmental sustainability is related to the protection of resources in the long term and the transfer of existing resources to future generations (Pearce, 2002; Eser , 2011). The main objectives in the environmental dimension of sustainable tourism are to decrease industrial waste, to use less packaging, and to extend the usage period of products. In addition, reprocessing and reusing waste materials and turning them into glass is important in terms of ensuring effective environmental sustainability (Beatley & Wheeler, 2004).

Socio-cultural dimension: This includes social, cultural and community elements. Social sustainability is possible through systematic social participation and a strong society. Social solidarity, social institutions, cultural identity,

diversity, respect, tolerance, humility, compassion, and love, which all form part of social capital, and socially accepted standards such as honesty, laws and discipline are important elements of social sustainability (Engin & Akgöz, 2013). Social sustainability aims to ensure equal access to available resources from each generation, and to ensure the balance of justice between present generations and future generations, as well as to ensure the balance of justice between present people. In addition, social sustainability considers it necessary to improve the quality of life of people living without basic resources such as clean water and food. This is because not taking social factors into consideration may result in the failure of a sustainable life (Asafu Adjaye, 2005; Öztürk, 2007). What really needs emphasising with the concept of cultural sustainability is not a traditionalist attitude, but a realisation that the past heritage, settlement conditions and principles of countries and communities are a great resource (Cebeci & Çakılcıoğlu, 2002).

Economic dimension: In terms of economy, it aims to minimise the preventive economic losses of consuming renewable resources, ensuring economic growth, consuming and reducing natural resources by calculating the cost of environmental pollution. Economic sustainability aims to increase the level of welfare in all segments of society, to ensure production with the least cost in all economic activities and, at the same time, to obtain maximum benefit. While protecting the natural, historical, cultural and environmental resources that constitute the main source of tourism, sustainable economic growth will be possible by providing a local labour force, increasing income and equal distribution (Şanlıöz Özgen, 2016).

Sustainable Tourism and Tour Guide Roles

It is important for the solution to the problems arising as a result of tourism movements to use the existing resources in a complementary manner and to ensure the sustainability of tourism by spreading tourism throughout the year. In line with sustainable principles, such as the efficient and effective use of tourism resources, all stakeholders in the sector have responsibilities. Of these stakeholders, tour guides are among the important actors.

Being aware of the environmental and socio-cultural impact of tourism, tour guides are effective both in the economic development of the local community and in positively influencing the behaviour of tourists as well as in protecting the natural, cultural and physical environment of the local community. In addition, tour guides educate tourists with their informative role (Weiler & Ham, 2002; Hillman, 2003; Skanavis & Giannoulis, 2009). Therefore, tour guides contribute to ensuring sustainability in tourism by acting as a bridge between the tourists, the natural environment and the public.

In tourism destinations, it is the main duty of the tour guide to realise sustainability goals by shaping the behaviour of visitors in order to minimise all the environmental damage that tourists do without being aware of it. Among the duties and responsibilities of the tour guide, there is behaviour such as exhibiting responsible behaviour between tourists and local people during the tour, preventing natural and cultural destruction, preventing damage to the environment and preventing the carrying capacity of the destination (Poudel & Nyaupae, 2013).

Although environmental awareness is increasing daily in line with sustainable tourism movements (Üzülmez et al. 2023), the negative effects of tourism activities on local people, the environment, culture and economy are extremely high. For this reason, tour guides play a key role in ensuring sustainability in tourism, especially in terms of providing a quality tourist experience and carrying out activities that emphasise the protection of all kinds of

natural, historical and cultural values in the destination, encouraging spending and increasing the welfare level of local people (Weiler & Black, 2015). Tour guides have a multifaceted management area between local people, the environment and culture within the sector they are in.

Therefore, it is of vital importance that tour guides perform their profession with an awareness of their role in ensuring the sustainability of tourism. In fact, while establishing the link between travellers and the visited region, guides also increase satisfaction and create a positive perception environment to ensure continuity (Hu & Wall, 2012). Therefore, the importance of guides in sustainable tourism cannot be denied.

Method

According to Toker (2022), the qualitative research method can explain the research stages and data analysis in detail. In this study, the qualitative research method was adopted to examine the views of tour guides on their role in sustainable tourism. Since the fact that the individuals participating in the study have experience with the phenomenon under study requires in-depth understanding of the essence of the experiences, the phenomenology design was used in the study. In this context, the phenomenology design, which used to understand events and phenomena in qualitative research, was utilised.

Participant Group of the Research

Voluntary individuals who had been working as tour guides for at least one year constituted the participant group of this study. The research data were collected via e-mail and social media between 5 March-16 April, 2024. The total number of participants included in the research consisted of twenty-six people. The data of two participants were not included in the data set because they were not related to the purpose of the research. A total of twenty-six participants were interviewed until data saturation and depth were reached and the data collection process was finalized (Patton, 2014). Participants were coded as P1, P2, P3, ...P26.

Data Collection Tool and the Interview Process

Before starting this study, approval with protocol number 45547 was obtained from Anadolu University Social and University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee. In the study, the interview technique was used as a qualitative research data collection tool. As a result of a literature review conducted by the researcher, an e-interview was created in Google Forms in accordance with the purpose of the research. The research data were collected through the e-interview form. In line with the purpose of the research, questions with regard to the practices of tour guides regarding the economic, socio-cultural and environmental dimensions of sustainable tourism on tours were prioritised. In order to provide the internal validity of the interview form,the exchange of ideas two experts, who were both academicians and tour guides, were consulted and the interview questions were finalised on 15 February, 2024. Pilot interviews were conducted using the face-to-face interview method before e-interviews were conducted. In the pilot interviews, a sufficient number of participants and data saturation could not be reached. In this context, it was decided to obtain the research data through e-interviews with expert opinion.

The question types created in the e-interview form consisted of three parts; demographic questions, questions. Questions were created by utilising Rabotić's (2010) study titled, ‘Tourist guiding from the perspective of sustainable tourism’. The activities related to the socio-cultural, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability in

questions 5, 6, 7 and 8 were created by utilising Tetik's (2017) chapter titled 'Tour guiding in sustainable tourism management'. E-interview questions are given in Table 1.

Table 1. E-interview questions

Demographic Questions
What is your education level?
What is your gender?
How many years of professional experience do you have?
What is the professional chamber of tour guiding you are registered with?
In which regions do you work as a tour guide?
Do you have a specialization? If yes, please indicate your area of specialization.
1. What do you know about sustainable tourism?
2. What can the Union of Turkish Tourist Guides Chambers (TUREB) and the Professional Chambers of Tour Guides do to make tour guides aware of sustainability? What are your suggestions?
3. What kind of practices can the Tourism Guidance Departments of universities carry out other than adding the sustainable tourism course to the curriculum?
4. What kind of sustainable tourism practices can be carried out in the tours you conduct as a tour guide? Explain with examples.
5. What roles do you need to have as a tour guide to contribute to sustainable tourism? Which roles do you fulfill?
6. As a tour guide, what activities do you engage in with group members to contribute to the environmental dimension of sustainability in your tours?
7. As a tour guide, what activities do you engage in with group members to contribute to the socio-cultural dimension of sustainability in your tours?
8. As a tour guide, what activities do you engage in with group members to contribute to the economic dimension of sustainability in your tours?

In this study, the participants were reached by way of social media and e-mail. The participants were asked whether they had worked as guides on tours before. Before the interviews, the participants were informed in regard to the purpose of the interviews, the questions in the e-interview form and the research. Afterwards, explanations were made concerning sustainable tourism and its dimensions to make the subject more understandable. The voluntary participation form was sent by way of e-mail before the interview. All the participants were assured that their personal information and sharing would remain confidential. In this context, the researcher read the interview texts carefully and then transferred the texts to MAXQDA 2024 for data analysis and visualization. The data obtained were coded, then themes were found and the codes and themes were organized. Finally, comments were made on the findings.

Deductive thematic analysis technique was used to analyse the research data. According to this approach, the data obtained are summarised and interpreted according to the themes previously determined based on the research question or sub-questions. The data can be organised according to the themes revealed by the research questions, or they can be presented by considering the questions or dimensions used in the interview process. In deductive analysis, direct quotations are frequently used in order to reflect the views of the interviewees in a striking way (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). According to Toker (2022), thematic analysis is a data analysis technique consisting of the processes of interpreting and reporting the data used in qualitative research methods by creating themes. The main reason why thematic analysis is frequently used is that it is an easy-to-follow technique with certain steps. The codes and themes created by the researcher are largely shaped by current and past readings on the subject, literature review, experience and perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The responses to two similar questions aimed at assessing participants' knowledge and conceptual perception of sustainable tourism have been merged into a single data set to avoid redundancy. A total of 654 codes were obtained in the research. The codes obtained were grouped under sub-codes and codes and the findings were interpreted. The data obtained in the research were analysed by two tour guide

academician experts and a consensus was reached.

Validity and Reliability of the Study

The most frequently used validity and reliability criteria in qualitative research are Lincoln and Guba's (1982) reliability criteria; credibility, consistency, verifiability and transferability. In order to increase the internal validity (credibility) of the research, a conceptual framework was created by reviewing the relevant literature while creating the interview form. In the qualitative data analysis, the themes and sub-themes that make up the themes were checked for compatibility within themselves, and integrity and reality were ensured with expert opinion.In the e-interview, it was stated in the voluntary participation form that the research would be used only for scientific purposes and that the interview would be kept confidential. Therefore, it was ensured that the data collected during the interview process reflected the real situation. In order to ensure the consistency criteria of the research, all the authors were involved in all stages of the data collection and the data analysis process with supervision being carried out.

To ensure the external validity (transferability) criterion of the research, the research process was shared transparently. In this context, the research model, participation group, data collection tool, data collection and data coding process were explained in detail, and the related studies in the literature were discussed by making comparisons. The 'purposive sampling' method was used on the basis of voluntary participation to show events, phenomena and variables. In order to increase the internal validity of the study, all the findings were conveyed directly and objectively without any interpretation.

In order to increase the external reliability (confirmability) of the research, the researcher confirmed all data collection tools, coding, notes and inferences by consulting external expert opinion. A 'diary' was kept to ensure the reliability and validity of the research. It was provided that the research method was used correctly and the appropriate research technique was used. Immediately after the data collection, the data were summarized and opinions on its accuracy were obtained. Expert review critically evaluated the research design, collected data, analysis and interpretation of results.

Findings

In the study, the participants' awareness, practices and suggestions regarding sustainable tourism were evaluated. The findings consist of the following: "Demographic characteristics of the participants", "Awareness towards sustainable tourism"; "Identifying roles for sustainable tourism"; "Practices for socio-cultural dimension of sustainable tourism"; "Practices for the economic dimension of sustainable tourism"; "Practices for the environmental dimension of sustainable tourism"; "Suggestions for sustainable tourism practices in tours" and "Recommendations for sustainable tourism practices"

The themes were supported with direct quotations from the participants' statements. The frequency of the statements related to these codes obtained from the participants' interviews is indicated. In addition, quotations from the most striking sample statements of the participants' interviews were included. As a result of the thematic analysis, seven themes and the number of codes associated with these themes are presented in Table. 2.

Table 2. Frequency of the Total of Expressions of the Themes

Themes	**Frequency of Expression**
Awareness of Sustainable Tourism	**39**
Identifying Roles for Sustainable Tourism	**114**
Practices for Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Sustainable Tourism	**119**
Practices for Environmental Dimensions of Sustainable Tourism	**167**
Practices for the Economic Dimension of Sustainable Tourism Practices	**107**
Suggestions for Sustainable Tourism Practices in Tours	**50**
Recommendations for Sustainable Tourism Practices	**58**
Total	**654**

Findings on the Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Demographic information on the age, gender, education level, years of professional experience, registered chamber and regions where guiding services are provided for the participants interviewed within the content of the research is given in Table 3.

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Participant	**Gender**	**Age**	**Education**	**Experience (Years)**	**Registered Chamber**	**Tour Guide Service Regions**	**Area of Specialization**
P1	Female	42	Undergraduate	15	İRO	Marmara, Aegean, Central Anatolia	No
P2	Female	49	Associate Degree	29	ANRO	National	Ankara, GAP, Black Sea
P3	Female	35	Undergraduate	13	ATRO	Marmara, Aegean	No
P4	Male	28	PhD	5	ARO	National, Abroad	No
P5	Male	48	Undergraduate	7	TRO	Black Sea Region, Central Anatolia	No
P6	Male	45	Undergraduate	7	ŞURO	Southeastern Anatolia, Black Sea Region	Yes
P7	Female	44	Undergraduate	23	İRO	National	Architectural tours, Cultural tours
P8	Female	29	PhD	1	NERO	Central Anatolia, Southeastern Anatolia, Eastern Anatolia	Yes
P9	Female	41	Undergraduate	20	NERO	National	Yes
P10	Female	42	PhD	19	ANRO	National, Abroad	Cultural heritage, Art history, Archaeology, Nature sports
P11	Male	29	Master's Degree	6	ADRO	National	No
P12	Female	45	Master's Degree	2	ARO	Mediterranean, Aegean	No
P13	Male	28	Master's Degree	4	ANRO	National	History of the Middle Ages, History of Anatolian Principalities
P14	Male	42	PhD	4	ANRO	National	No
P15	Male	34	Master's Degree	7	ANRO	National, Abroad	No
P16	Male	32	Undergraduate	6	ARO	National	No
P17	Male	47	Master's Degree	2	İRO	Marmara	No
P18	Male	27	Undergraduate	1	MURO	Aegean	No
P19	Female	50	Undergraduate	27	İRO	National	No
P20	Male	33	Master's Degree	15	ŞURO	National	Yes

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (cont.)

P21	Male	43	Undergraduate	14	BURO	National	No
P22	Female	39	Master's Degree	3	İRO	National	Istanbul Routes, Eastern Roman Empire, Water Architecture, Archaeology
P23	Male	54	Master's Degree	5	İZRO	National	No
P24	Female	35	Master's Degree	3	ANRO	Central Anatolia	No
P25	Female	26	PhD	5	ANRO	Marmara, Central Anatolia, Black Sea	No
P26	Male	31	Master's Degree	6	ATRO	Aegean, Black Sea, Central Anatolia	No

Interviews were conducted with a total of twenty-six people; twelve women and fourteen men. It was determined that the ages of the participants ranged between twenty-six and fifty-four years with the average age being thirty-eight years. The educational status of the participants was distributed as follows: associate degree "1"; Undergraduate "10"; Master's degree "10"; and PhD "5". The participants' years of professional experience ranged from at least one to twenty-nine years.

According to the frequency of repetition they are: Ankara Chamber of Tour guides (ANRO) "7"; Istanbul Chamber of Tour guides (İRO) "5" ; Antalya Chamber of Tour guides (ARO) "3"; Nevşehir Chamber of Tour guides (NERO) "2" ; Şanlıurfa Regional Chamber of Tour guides (ŞURO) "2" ; Aydın Chamber of Tour guides (ATRO) "2" ; Bursa Regional Chamber of Tour guides (BURO) "1" ; Izmir Chamber of Tour guides (İZRO) "1" ; Muğla Chamber of Tour guides (MURO) "1" ; Trabzon Regional Chamber of Tour guides (TRO) "1"; and Adana Regional Chamber of Tour guides (ADRO) "1". When the regions where tour guide services are provided are analyzed, according to the frequency of repetition, these are listed as follows: National "15"; Central Anatolia "6"; Aegean "5"; Marmara "4"; Black Sea "5"; Southeastern Anatolia "2"; Eastern Anatolia "1"; Mediterranean "1", and Abroad "3"

When the findings related to the participants' area of specialization are analyzed, seventeen participants answered "No" and 4 participants answered "Yes". The participants who stated their area of specialization were as follows: P2 "Ankara, GAP, Black Sea"; P7 "Architectural tours, Cultural tours"; P10 "Cultural heritage, Art history, Archaeology, Nature sports"; P13 "History of the Middle Ages, History of Anatolian Principalities"; and P22 "Istanbul Routes, Eastern Roman Empire, Water Architecture, Archaeology". In the light of the data obtained as a result of the e-interviews, themes, sub-themes, codes, frequency of expression and sample expressions are given. In addition, the answers given by the interviewees to the questions are stated with sample expressions in line with the research purpose.

Awareness of Sustainable Tourism

Awareness of the concept of sustainable tourism refers to the level of knowledge of individuals or society about the concept, principles, and practices of sustainable tourism (UNWTO, 2004). Data on sustainable tourism awareness of tour guides were obtained. The codes belonging to this theme are given in Figure 1.

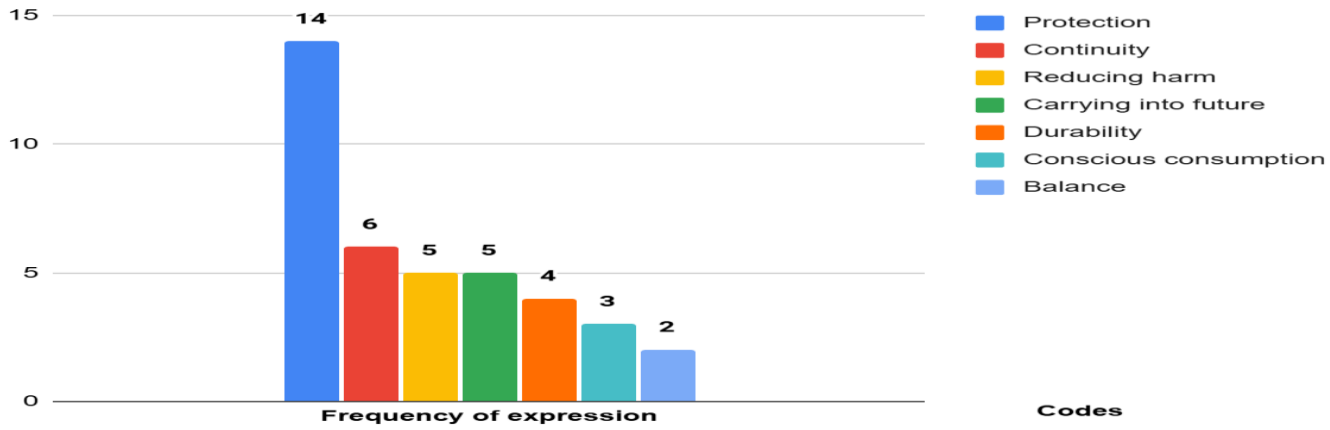

Figure 1. Awareness of Sustainable Tourism Theme

When the sustainable tourism awareness of the participants was analysed, the concept of preservation came to the fore among the statements related to the protection of natural and cultural heritage and values. For example, P21 emphasised the protection of tourism values with the statement "Protecting our tourism values in a way to keep pace with today." Supporting this statement, P5 drew attention to the careful protection of everything in the interaction with the statement "Careful protection of every place and everything we interact with, in short, our environment." Regarding the "Continuity" code, it was emphasised that tourism activities are important for the continuity of tourism activities and the natural environment. In P16's statement "I can say that the continuity should be ensured by minimising the negative effects of tourism and supporting the local economy without harming the natural environment.", it is understood that continuity should be ensured by supporting the local economy. Regarding the "Reducing harm" code, P26 emphasised minimising the damage to the natural environment in his statement as "Not harming the environment and minimising the damages caused by mass tourism." The concept of carrying it to the future was explained by P13 with the expressions "It is the inheritance and carrying of the existing tourism heritage to the future without being destroyed and the future utilisation of the resources subject to tourism." The concept of durability was emphasised by P4 as "Ensuring continuity by using all resources, especially natural assets, in a recyclable manner if it is possible to recycle them, and at a minimal level if it is not possible." In relation to the conscious consumption code, P7 participant used the expressions "It is tourism that evaluates different options from tourism routes to accommodation, which is not consumption-oriented based on environmentalist principles, but consciously focused on promoting nature." Regarding the concept of balance, participant P9 emphasised that balance is aimed with the statements "Sustainable tourism is an approach that aims to manage and balance tourism activities in a way that can meet the needs of current and future generations by maintaining environmental, social and economic balance."

The Identifying Roles for Sustainable Tourism

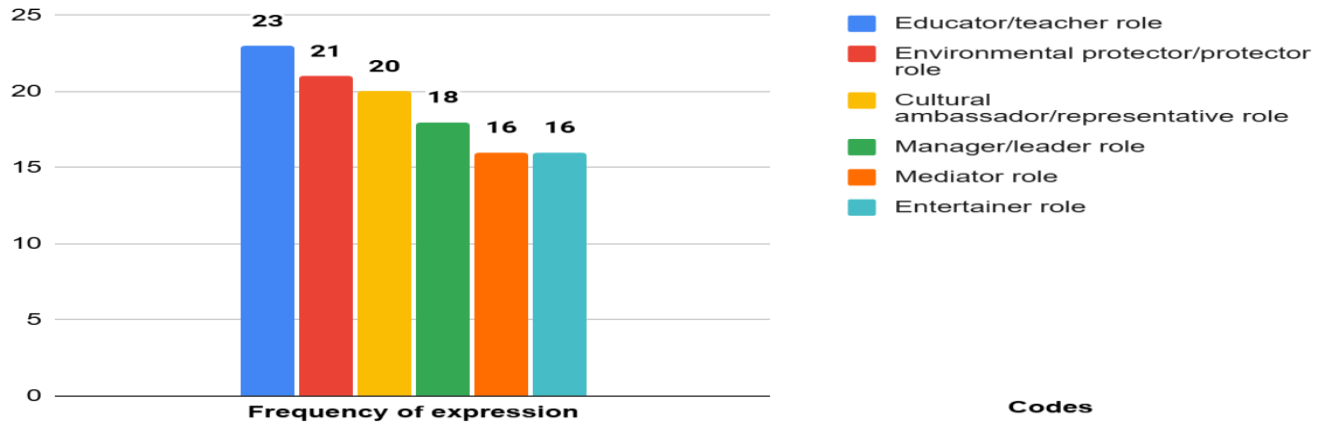

Figure 2. The Theme of Determining The Roles of the Participants Towards Sustainable Tourism

The codes belonging to the theme of determining the roles of the participants towards sustainable tourism are presented in Figure 2. According to the results of the thematic analysis, the most prominent roles are "Educator/teacher role", "Environmental protector/protector role" and "Cultural ambassador/representative role". For example, participant P3 stated that "I not only inform tourists about the destination, but also guide them to pay attention to the balance of conservation and use in line with the sustainable tourism approach." Similarly, participant P7 stated that "I guide tourists about the protection of the environment during the tour and encourage sustainable behaviours." and expressed the informative and environmental protection responsibilities of guides. As for the protection and transfer of cultural heritage, participant P10 said, "I ensure that tourists respect this cultural heritage by conveying the cultural values of the region accurately and effectively." His statement stands out. In addition, it was observed that other roles such as "Manager/leader role", "Mediator role" and "Entertainer role" were also expressed by the participants. Participant P5 drew attention to the roles mentioned in the statement "As a tour guide, while guiding the group effectively, I try to resolve possible cultural or social incompatibilities and use interactive narratives to make the experience enjoyable." Participants emphasised that tour guides should undertake these roles in order to contribute to sustainable tourism. These roles show that tour guides are not only people who convey information, but also actors who manage group dynamics, ensure cultural harmony and enrich the experience.

The Practices for Socio-Cultural Dimension of Sustainable Tourism



Figure 3. The Theme of The Practices For The Socio-Cultural Dimension of Sustainable Tourism

The codes belonging to the theme of practices for the socio-cultural dimension of sustainable tourism are presented in Figure 3. When the frequency of repetition of the codes belonging to this theme was analysed, it was found that the expression preventing damage to historical sites, objects and texture was the most repeated code. P2, one of the participants, used the expression "I make warnings about not touching the objects for the protection of historical sites. It was determined that it is important to encourage the use of public markets and local restaurants." For example, participant P16 supports this with the statement "I encourage tourist groups to shop in the local market by giving them free time." However, the necessity of informing tourists about the general attitude and social rules of the local people was emphasised. Participant P8 expressed his efforts in this direction with the statement "I give warnings about the traditions, customs and social rules of the village people."

The importance of taking measures to prevent possible conflicts between locals and visitors was also mentioned by the participants. For example, P3 reveals her sensitivity on this issue with his statement as "I warn the tour group to prevent tensions between local people and tourists." In addition, it was stated that the use of geographically marked products should be encouraged. Participant P18 shared his approach on this issue by saying, "I recommend local products and geographically marked products for product shopping.' In addition, the importance of visiting the places where community-based projects are carried out was emphasised. Participant P9 expressed her contribution to this issue with the statement "As a tour guide, I include donation-based museums for children in my tours." Finally, it was stated that tourists should be informed about foundations, associations and aid organisations. Participant P16 expressed own individual contribution by saying, "I give short information about social aid organisations to encourage tourists to support disadvantaged groups."

The Practices for the Economic Dimension of Sustainable Tourism

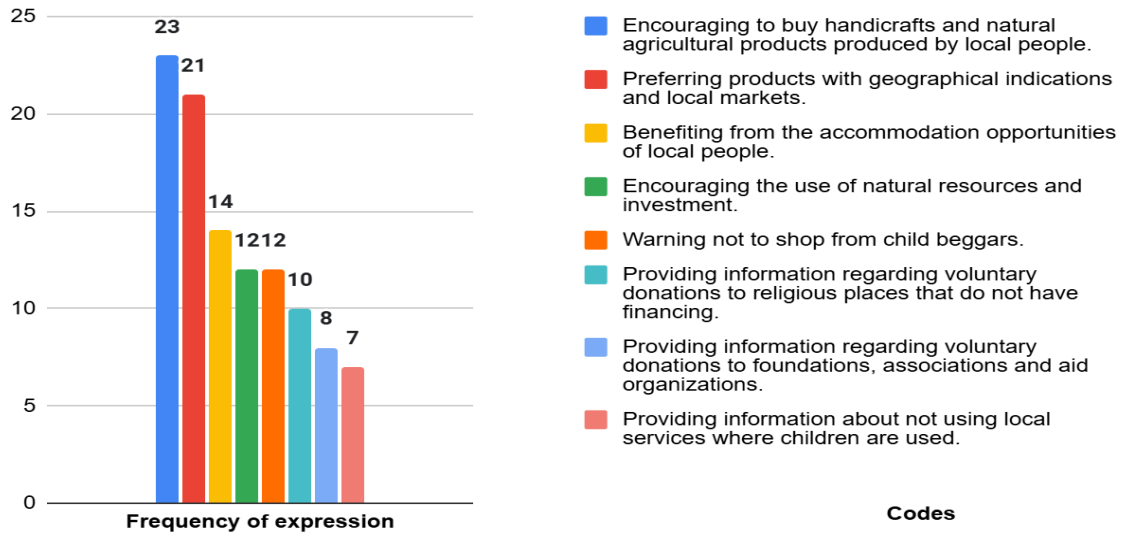

Figure 4. The Theme of Practices For The Economic Dimension of Sustainable Tourism

The codes belonging to the theme of practices for the economic dimension of sustainable tourism are presented in Figure 4. In this context, it was determined that it is important to encourage tourists to buy handicrafts and natural agricultural products produced by local people. Participant P1 stated that he encouraged the preference of local products with the statement "I direct tourists to buy local products and naturally produced products." In addition, it

was emphasised that geographically marked products and local markets should be supported. For example, participant P15 stated that he directs tourists to buy such products with the statement "I encourage local market visits by giving information to the participants about the geographical products of the region." Participants emphasised the importance of making use of the accommodation facilities of local people. In this regard, participant P6 suggested, "In villages and towns, especially local property and accommodation facilities should be preferred." In addition, it was pointed out that sustainable use of natural resources and investments should be encouraged. For example, participant P5 expressed his sensitivity about natural resources with the statement "I draw attention to the use of the natural environment and resources in my tours."

It was also emphasised that child begging should not be encouraged. Participant P3 stated that he raised awareness on the prevention of child abuse with the statement "I warn tourists not to buy anything from young children, especially those who are selling and begging, and not to encourage begging." Participants emphasised that tourists should be informed about voluntary donations to non-financed religious places and charity organisations. Participant P6 conveyed his sensitivity to this issue with the statement "I inform tourists during the tour that they can make voluntary financial donations to charity organisations." Finally, it was emphasised that child labour should not be supported. Participant P21 expressed his efforts to prevent child abuse with the statement "I inform the group not to prefer places where children are employed."

The Practices for the Environmental Dimension of Sustainable Tourism

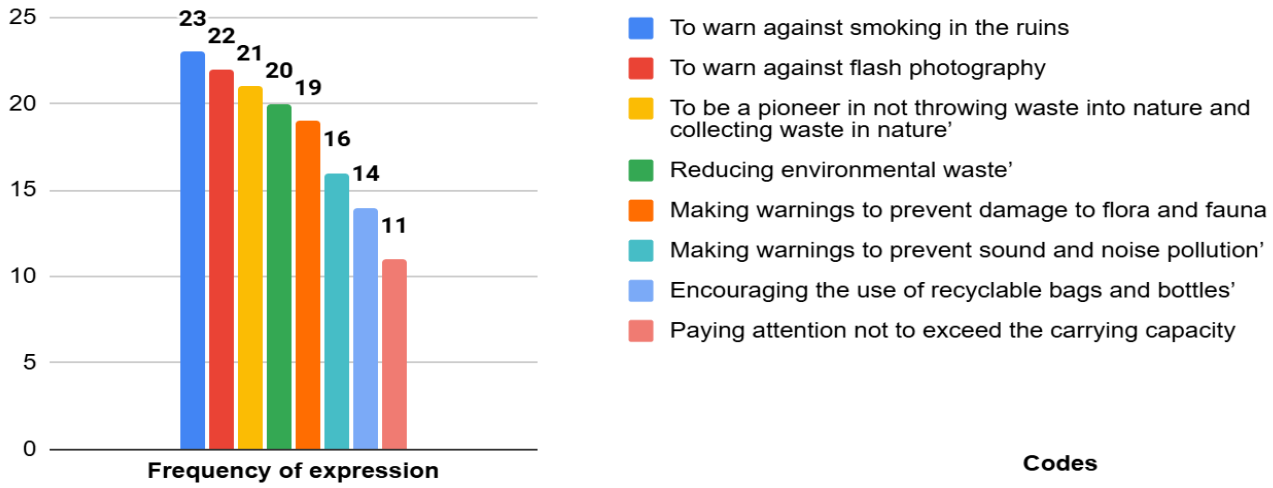

Figure 5. The Theme of The Practices For The Environmental Dimension of Sustainable Tourism

The codes belonging to the theme of practices for the environmental dimension of sustainable tourism are presented in Figure 5. Participants emphasised that various measures should be taken to ensure environmental sustainability. In particular, it was stated that informing visitors about the harms of smoking in archaeological sites is an important practice. In this regard, participant P3 emphasised the necessity of raising awareness with the statement "I inform visitors about the environmental and cultural heritage damages of smoking in archaeological sites." It was also stated that the use of flash photography in museums should be prevented. Participant P7 drew attention to this issue by saying, "I inform tour participants because I know that the use of flash in museums can damage artefacts." Regarding waste management, it was emphasised that waste should not be thrown into nature and the environment should be protected by collecting existing waste. Participant P5 drew attention to the importance of

individual awareness with the statement "I take care to collect garbage during the tour and encourage the use of garbage bins." P3 emphasised that flora and fauna should not be harmed with the following statement: "I state that flowers are more beautiful in their branches on every tour."

In order to prevent sound and noise pollution, participant P10 emphasised the necessity of noise control by saying "I try to speak more quietly in the museum and pay attention to the use of headphones." Within the scope of sustainable tourism, it was suggested to encourage the use of recyclable bags and bottles. Participant P12 stated that sustainable consumption should be supported by saying, "I suggest my guests use recyclable canteens instead of plastic." Finally, it was stated that the carrying capacity of destinations should not be exceeded. Participant P15 drew attention to the importance of capacity management with his statement as "I consider the visitor capacity in tour planning and avoid crowding."

Suggestions for Sustainable Tourism Practices in Tours

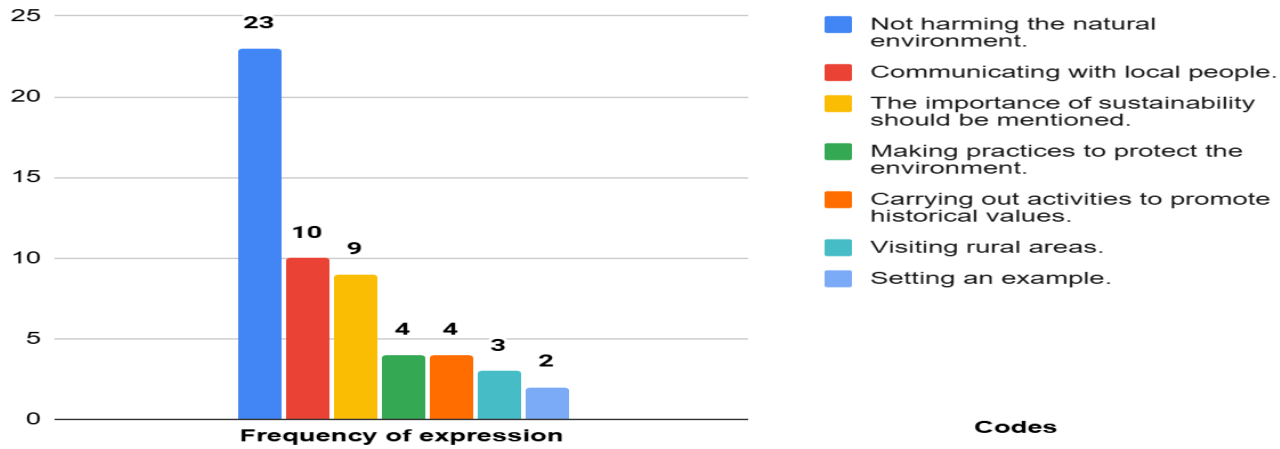

Figure 6. The Theme of Tour Guides' Suggestions For Sustainable Tourism Practices On Tours

The codes belonging to the theme of tour guides' suggestions for sustainable tourism practices on tours are given in Figure 6. When the codes belonging to the theme of tour guides' suggestions for sustainable tourism practices in tours are sorted according to the frequency of repetition, it was determined that the statements related to the code "Not harming the natural environment" were the most common. Among the participants, P14 emphasised that he made warnings about not harming the natural environment with the statement "I make warnings about not harming nature and not throwing rubbish into the environment during tours of natural areas." P7 stated that the reduction of damage to the natural environment should be encouraged by recycling with the statement "Water drinkers instead of water bottle consumption, throwing garbage into recycling, sharing things such as tour programmes via e-mail without printing them on paper." P23, who supports this explanation, mentions practices that can be done without harming the natural environment with the statement preventing the use of plastic bottles.

The importance of communicating with local people was emphasised. Participant P16 emphasised the importance of establishing social relations with local people in the statement "Groups should be in contact with local people as much as possible and try to understand the society." Regarding the code providing information about the importance of sustainability, P18 stated "The importance of sustainability should be mentioned." and emphasised the necessity

of providing information for sustainability. In the statement of P12 related to the code making practices to protect the environment, The participant said "Nature-friendly vehicles can be used. Cable cars, trams, and short tours in nature can be done." The participant stated that the environment should be protected with nature-friendly tools. P21 participant used the expressions "Studies to protect, recognise and promote historical values." about conducting studies to promote historical values.

Participants stated the necessity of visiting rural areas. Participant P12 drew attention to the fact that villages can be opened to public visits with the statements "Visiting tourism to villages and participating in folk entertainment can establish a connection between tourists and the public." In terms of being an example, participant P7 said, "I try to be a role model in protecting the environment and being an example myself with behaviours that do not harm the environment. For example, when I see a water bottle or a small waste on the ground at an archaeological site during a tour, I pick it up and carry it in my hand until I see a garbage can."

Recommendations for Sustainable Tourism Practices

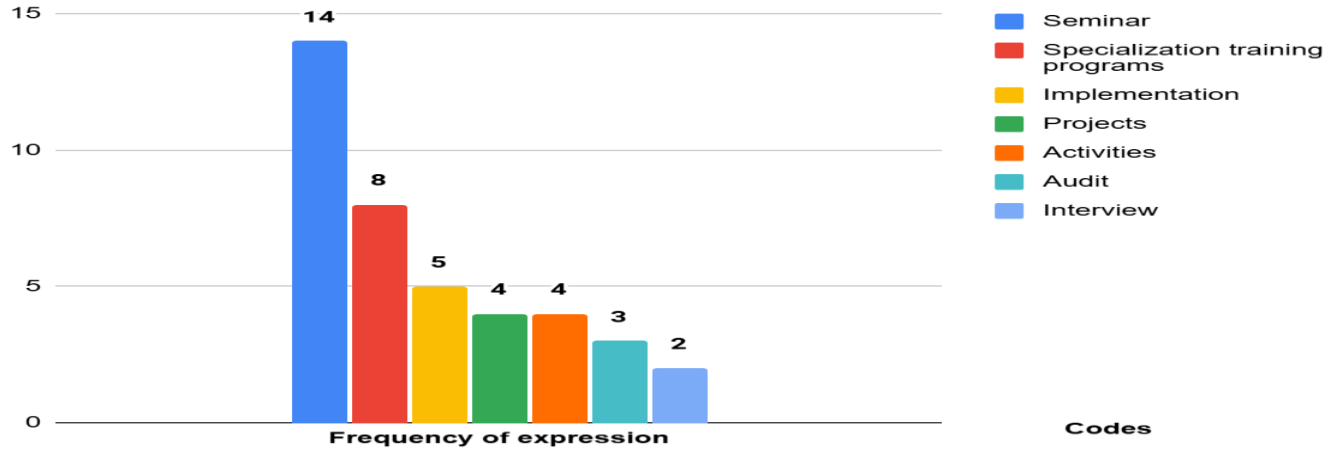

Figure 7. The Theme of the Recommendations For Sustainable Tourism Practices

The codes belonging to the theme of participants' suggestions for tourism practices are given in Figure 7. The most repeated code related to this theme was determined as the seminar. P16 stated that seminars should be organised for awareness in the statement "Seminars should be organised for the awareness of the conscious or unconscious damages to the future of tourism in Türkiye while we continue our lives through tourism, which is the main source of livelihood for all of us." P14 supported this statement by saying "Short seminars should be organised from time to time in order to increase the awareness on sustainability and to keep this concept in the minds of guides." P25, on the other hand, suggested that seminars should be organised in cooperation with universities and the Association of Chambers of Tourist Guides.

Regarding the code specialisation training programmes, P10 drew attention to the necessity of specialisation with the statement "Specialisation training programmes can be opened." P5 related to the implementation code emphasised the necessity of planning practical field visits with the statement "Field visits can be planned for examples of good and bad practices in order to concretise the subject." Participants emphasised the importance of project development. For example, P12 stated that "Project assignments, social experiments can be done." On the other hand, P23 participant emphasised the importance of raising awareness with activities by saying "Activities that will raise

awareness can be done in a region for recycling, cleaning, reducing the use of plastic, and activities in the press with emphasis." Regarding the concept of audit, P3 participant drew attention to the necessity of audit with the statements "First of all, in-house luxury expenditures of institutions should be audited." Finally, the necessity of the interview was stated. P4 participant said, "There should be interviews for participation in the training process and questions about sustainable tourism should be asked."

Conclusion and Discussion

The main purpose of the study is to determine the roles of tour guides within the scope of the tours they undertake regarding the socio-cultural, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable tourism. In addition to the main purpose of the study, the aim was to reveal the practices of tour guides on tours and their awareness of sustainable tourism. When the demographic characteristics of the tour guides who participated in the interview were analyzed, it was determined that twelve of the twenty-six participants were female, and fourteen were male, with an average age of thirty-eight years. In this study, research was conducted with participants of different age ranges and with a wide profile. Considering the educational status of the participants, it was determined that most of the participants had Bachelor's and Master's degrees. The participants' years of professional experience ranged from at least one to twenty years. Therefore, it was determined that the duration of the participants' professional experience is also in a wide range.

Within the scope of the research, the areas of expertise of the tour guides were determined as follows: Ankara; GAP; Black Sea; Architectural tours; Cultural tours; Cultural heritage; Art history; Archaeology; Nature sports; History of the Middle Ages; History of Anatolian Principalities; Personalized Istanbul Routes; Eastern Roman Empire; Water Architecture; and Archaeology. It was determined that the participants interviewed in this study did not have any expertise in sustainable tourism.

The common concept that came to the forefront in the theme of awareness of tour guides regarding sustainable tourism was the expression 'conservation'. The concept of conservation includes the protection and understanding of natural resources that are difficult to reproduce in the world, and the cultural heritage and assets created by human beings. Therefore, it has been revealed that tour guides have a high level of awareness of sustainable tourism by ensuring the protection of natural resources and cultural heritage. When compared with the definition of ensuring the protection of the local economy, natural and cultural heritage by minimizing the negative effects of tourism on society and the environment within the extent of sustainable tourism goals, the fact that the participants made associations with the phrase 'protect' shows that their awareness levels are high.

Hu & Wall (2012) emphasize that the predominant role of tour guides may vary according to the structure of the tour group, the way the trip operates, the conditions of the destination and the wishes of travel agencies. In this study, an attempt has been made to determine the roles of tour guides in sustainable tourism. The participants of this study stated that they assumed an 'educator/instructor role' in sustainable tourism. In the findings of this study, it was determined that the 'educator/teacher role' and the 'knowledge transmitter role' are roles that support each other. This result supports the results of the studies conducted by Güzel et al. (2021), Chowdhary & Prakash (2020), and Çapar & Yenipınar (2017). Unlike the results of this study, there are also studies emphasizing that tour guides fail to educate tourists regarding the environment (Kong, 2014).

In this study, the practice that tour guides pay the most attention to regarding the socio-cultural dimension of sustainable tourism was determined as 'preventing damage to historical sites, objects and textures'. The role of the tour guide regarding the socio-cultural dimension of sustainable tourism was determined as 'environmental protector/protector role'. Weiler and Davis (1993) state that tour guides have responsibilities for protecting the historical and natural environment in the destination. They explain this with the role of resource manager, which is similar to the 'environmental protector/protector role' found in this study.

One of the most important results of this study is that the practice that tour guides pay the most attention to regarding the economic dimension of sustainable tourism is determined to be 'encouraging the purchase of handicrafts and natural agricultural products produced by local people'. It is determined that tour guides assume the 'role of promoting the economy' regarding the economic dimension of sustainability. Tour guides facilitate the development of sustainable tourism (Rabotić, 2010) by assuming the role of promoting the local economy by supporting the regional economy (Güzel et al., 2021). Tătar et al. (2018) emphasize in their study that tour guides encourage tourists to consume local products on tours, and Hu & Wall (2012) and Pereira & Mykletun (2012) emphasize that tour guides support sustainable development goals by contributing to the welfare of local people.

According to the findings obtained in this study, the tour guides stated that they assume the role of 'environmental protector/protector' in the environmental dimension of sustainable tourism and that the practice they pay the most attention to is 'warning about not smoking in ruins'. These findings support the results of studies conducted by Pereira & Mykletun (2012), Weiler & Black (2015), Çapar & Yenipınar (2017), and Tetik Dinç & Güdü Demirbulat (2019). Chowdhary & Prakash (2020) emphasize in their study that tour guides can positively affect the behavior of visitors in combating the major problems brought about by climate change.

The statement 'not harming the natural environment' was found to be the most important element in the suggestions of tour guides for sustainable tourism practices in tours. Weiler and Davis (1993) state in their study that tour guides should exhibit environmentally sensitive behavior in order to contribute to tourists' knowledge and attitude change regarding the sustainability of nature. In addition, it was emphasized by the researchers that they should love nature and living things (Ay & Yetgin, 2020; Yetgin Akgün, Ay & Çalık, 2022). The second element of the study is 'communicating with local people'. Kaya and Ergüven (2021) state in their study that local people are important for tourists to recognize the destination. Tourists who establish meaningful relationships with local people through tour guides can have both more enjoyable experiences and contribute to the protection of natural and cultural heritage (Chowdhary & Prakash, 2020).

Within the scope of this study, it has been determined that the practices of tour guides contribute positively to sustainability. The findings show that tour guide practices significantly impact environmental, economic and social sustainability. According to Scherrer et al. (2011), the tour guide's group management skills and knowledge level positively affect the behavior of visitors and their potential impact on environmental and cultural sites, as well as visitor satisfaction. However, several researchers have concluded that tour guides negatively influence tourists with wrong behavioral patterns and are completely unfamiliar with practical applications for improving sustainability (Gaspar, 2024; Kong, 2014; Weiler & Kim, 2011; Sandaruwani & Gnanapala, 2016). In addition, some studies found that the contribution of tour guides to sustainable tourism is low (Pereira & Mykletun, 2012; Hu, 2007).

Practical Implications

As a result of the research, it was determined that tour guides do not have expertise in the field of education on sustainable tourism practices. In addition, in this study, suggestions were made for Union of Turkish Tourist Guides Chambers (TUREB) and universities to provide face-to-face or online seminars on sustainable tourism practices. In the light of these findings, it is recommended that tour guides should develop their skills in all dimensions of sustainable tourism, raise awareness and receive training in their areas of specialization. This approach will support both their individual development and the sustainability of the tourism sector.

Christie and Mason (2003) emphasize in their study that training and seminars on sustainable tourism should not only improve the knowledge and skills of tour guides, but also bring about a positive change in their attitudes and behavior towards environmentally sensitive activities. For example, those who organize seminars on sustainable tourism could invite local government experts on sustainability and tour guides specializing in ecotourism. For participating tour guides, workshops and seminars where invited speakers will share nature-based education methods are informative. Such events can contribute to improving the interpretation and communication skills of the participants by providing concrete examples of successful practices. They also have the potential to increase their motivation towards sustainable tourism.

On the other hand, it can be suggested that public institutions and universities cooperate and organize awareness training. Training in all dimensions of sustainable tourism could be organized on tourist guiding practice training trips. Trainer tour guides should be role models for the guide candidates by adopting sustainability on the tours during the practice trip. In this way, they could increase both the environmental and cultural awareness of the candidates and encourage them to exhibit positive attitudes and behavior. Therefore, they would contribute both to the protection of destinations and enrich the tourist experiences of the participants on future tours of the tour guide candidates. In addition, tour guides should encourage tourists to consume local products and buy locally produced handicrafts and souvenirs.

Limitations and Future Research

Although the findings of this study contribute significantly to the existing literature, it has several limitations. Based on this, suggestions for future studies have been developed. First of all, the participant group of the study consisted of only tour guides. Therefore, the findings do not apply to other tourism stakeholders, such as travel agencies, destination managers and tourists. For future researchers, the participant group of the study could be expanded with tourism stakeholders, and comprehensive research could be focused on the dimensions of sustainable tourism.

In this study, the sample represented only Türkiye. It is recommended that future studies be applied to tour guides in different countries. Therefore, different results could be obtained by providing a broader perspective with future comparative studies by taking cultural differences into account. Another limitation of this study is that there was not enough time to collect the research data, which was collected over a short period of approximately two months between 5 March and 16 April, 2024. To observe the changes in the effects of tour guides on sustainable development over time, it is recommended to conduct long-term studies in the future. By this means, more comprehensive insights into the trends and changes in tourists' behavior can be obtained.

A further limitation of the study is that the research data was collected through questions created in Google Forms. In future studies, it is suggested to conduct face-to-face interviews to obtain deeper information about the practices of tour guides regarding sustainable tourism. This study did not collect data from tour guide students. In future studies, the awareness of tour guide candidates regarding the economic, socio-cultural and environmental dimensions of sustainability and the roles they undertake could be examined in tour guiding practice training trips. Another limitation of the study is that only the qualitative data analysis method was used. To provide a more comprehensive analysis of this issue, it may be recommended using mixed method approaches combining qualitative and quantitative data in future research.

Declaration

All the authors of the article contributed equally to the article process. The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare. In order to collect the data used in this study, approval was obtained from the Anadolu University Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee, protocol number 455473.

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Appendix 1. Ethics Committee Permission



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ANADOLU ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL VE BEŞERÎ BİLİMLER BİLİMSEL ARAŞTIRMA VE YAYIN ETİĞİ KURULU
KARAR BELGESİ

ÇALIŞMANIN TÜRÜ:	BAP Projesi-Yüksek Lisans Tez Çalışması
KONU:	Sosyal Bilimler
BAŞLIK:	Turist Rehberlerinin Sürdürülebilir Turizmdeki Rolleri
~~PROJE~~/TEZ YÜRÜTÜCÜSÜ:	Doç. Dr. Duygu YETGİN AKGÜN
TEZ YAZARI:	Ayşegül AŞÇI
ALT KOMİSYON GÖRÜŞÜ:	-
KARAR:	Olumlu

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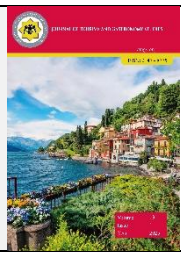

The Role of Tour Guides in Sustainable Tourism Practices

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Abstract

Tour guides are important tourism stakeholders who undertake roles in transferring tourism to future generations, using resources efficiently, minimising the destruction of natural areas and ensuring sustainability in tourism. Based on this, the main purpose of the study is to determine the roles of tour guides within the scope of their tours regarding the socio-cultural, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable tourism. In addition to the main goal of the study, the aim is to uncover the practices of tour guides on tours and their awareness of sustainable tourism. The research data were collected from a total of twenty-six participants working as tour guides between 5 March-16 April, 2024, through an e-interview form. The deductive thematic analysis of the data obtained in the research was carried out using the MAXQDA 2024 software program. As a result of the research, it was revealed that tour guides undertake various roles such as educator/instructor, environmental protector/ protector, and economic promoter regarding sustainable tourism. Tour guides stated that they care about protecting the natural environment of the regions visited on tours and that they are role models for tour participants in this regard. It has been determined that tour guides fulfill practices; preventing damage to historical sites, archaeological remains and findings, and the texture of the place in the socio-cultural dimension of sustainable tourism. They encourage the purchase of handicrafts and natural agricultural products produced by locals in the economic dimension, and warn people not to smoke in archaeological ruins in the environmental dimension. Tour guides' suggestions for sustainable tourism practices include organizing online or hands-on seminars.

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INTRODUCTION

With the impact of globalization, sustainable tourism practices have gained importance for the continuity of the tourism industry in recent years (Sevinç & Duran, 2018; Düz, 2022). Factors such as the increase in the world population, overuse of natural resources, deterioration of the environment, and limited energy resources have revealed the importance of sustainability practices. Sustainable tourism is an approach that adopts the principle of environmental, social and economic sustainability of tourism activities. This approach aims to ensure the sustainability of the tourism sector by protecting the natural, cultural and historical values of different tourism destinations, supporting the participation of local people and contributing economically to the region (Tankuş et al., 2023).

The main objectives of sustainable tourism are to minimise the harmful effects of tourism and to carry it into the future by ensuring the most efficient use of socio-cultural, economic and environmental resources. In this respect, the importance of sustainability in tourism is increasing. The World Tourism Organisation and the World Federation of Guides Association declared 2017 as the 'International Year of Sustainable Tourism' (Tătar et al., 2018). In order to achieve real sustainability in tourism, everyone in the sector has a significant share (Yüksek et al., 2019; Kavak & Emir, 2022). Tour guides are among the tourism stakeholders who interact directly with both visitors and local people in the tourism sector and are closest to tourist resources (Çapar & Yenipınar, 2017). Thanks to the information provided by the tour guide, tourists can exhibit responsible actions and develop environmentally sensitive behaviour (Randall & Rollins, 2005; Tetik, 2017), learn how to use the resources of the destination, and contribute economically to the local community (Hu, 2007).

Tour guides are seen by visitors as representatives or ambassadors of the tourist region as well as protectors. On the other hand, tour guides not only fulfil their professional obligations, but also feel the need to warn tourists to prevent any kind of damage by considering the environmental, economic, socio-cultural dimensions and to set an example to tourists with their behaviour (Rabotić, 2010). At the Development Summit organised by the United Nations General Assembly and member states in 2015, the goals planned to be achieved by 2030 were determined. Sustainable development goals consist of seventeen goals (Tankuş et al., 2023). Therefore, tour guides should not only be limited to contributing to the success of the tourism sector, but also take on more comprehensive roles to support the development of a sustainable tourism and contribute to sustainable development goals.

It is important to investigate which practices tour guides perform and which roles they undertake to contribute to sustainable tourism's economic, socio-cultural and environmental dimensions. Based on this, the study's main purpose is to determine the roles of tour guides within the scope of the tours they undertake regarding the socio-cultural, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable tourism. In addition to the study's main purpose, it was attempted to determine the practices of tour guides on tours and their awareness of sustainable tourism.

Literature

The Roles of Tour Guides

A tour guide is a person who accompanies, guides, provides information and promotes places of visit, and helps to make sense of the socio-cultural and economic perceptions of the visitors (Ahipaşaoğlu, 2001; Düz, 2017; Kaya & Yetgin, 2021). In today's tourism, expectations for the tour guide have increased over time, and visitors have now

moved beyond an operational guidance service that only describes the route during the tour process, guides the way, and conveys standard information such as the history, and the human and geographical structure of the region or structures in the programme. Tourists now tend to be more interested in interactional guiding that plays a role in the holistic understanding and assimilation of the culture visited and experienced, as well as the history and stories mentioned in the narratives, and in stimulating positive emotions in the mind (Moscardo, 1998; Weiler & Ham, 2002; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006).

In this context, tour guides are individuals who have a significant impact on shaping the behaviour of visitors with their role performance in ensuring the sustainability of tourism (Alazaizeh et al., 2019). In addition to their extensive knowledge and ability to represent culture, tour guides undertake various roles towards tourists, the country and the local community, the public, local culture, the environment and nature. Research on the roles of tour guides dates back to the late 1970s (Tetik Dinç & Güdü Demirbulat, 2019). In review the studies in the literature were examined, classifications from belonging to different authors were found. Within the scope of this study, the main roles of tour guides are identified as an educator/instructor role, a manager/leader role, a cultural ambassador/representative role, an environmental protector/protector role, an entertainer/enjoyer role and an economic promoter role.

Educator/instructor role: This means that the tour guide provides information regarding the region and promotes it. The information given by tour guides in regard to the region consists of three areas: tour and route, distance, travel time, local facilities; behavioural information to change the behaviour of visitors in the region, to guide them, and to determine the rules to be followed; and educational information to give historical, geographical, cultural and human information regarding the region (Hu, 2007; Yetgin, 2017; Asmadili, Asmadili & Yüksek, 2018).

Manager/leader role: The tour guide is the person responsible for every stage of the tour, such as implementing the tour programme and providing information from the beginning to the end of the tour (Köroğlu, 2019). The leader role of the tour guide is stated as the person who organises, manages a tour, provides access, and holds the control mechanism. The tour guide who assumes a leader role is the person who knows the direction, access to the destination, team knowledge and safety, and maintains harmony within the group (Cohen, 1985). In other words, it refers to providing control and guiding tourists by recognising them throughout the tour (Pond, 1993; Yetgin, 2017; Kalyoncu & Yüksek, 2017).

Cultural ambassador/representative role: The cultural ambassador role was first mentioned in the literature by Cohen (1985). The representative role of the tour guide refers to representing the region, the country and the travel agency he/she works for to tourists. In addition to this, he/she has the role of representing the tourists to whom he/she provides guidance services against the external environment in social, economic and environmental terms (Ahipaşaoğlu, 2001; Batman, 2003; Zhang & Chow, 2004).

Environmental protector/protector role: The environmental protection role refers to the fact that tour guides encourage tourists to behave responsibly in order to prevent damage to the region they visit and to spread this behaviour over a long period of time, to minimise environmental pollution, and to encourage the use of renewable energy sources (Hu, 2007). By assuming this role, tour guides should try to set an example to the participants with their environmental sensitivity, knowledge and behaviour (Köroğlu, 2013). In addition, it is emphasised that tour guides will reduce the negative effects of guests on wildlife by providing preliminary information on how to behave towards wildlife and the environment. Failure to manage and inform tourists correctly may cause possible damage to

the environment (Taylı, 2003). The protective role is both the protection against possible dangers to tourists and the protection of the tourist region (Yetgin, 2017; Yetgin Akgün, 2020). In addition, the tour guide feels the obligation to protect the environment in which he/she works and lives, as well as the need to personally warn tourists when their behaviour is inadequate and harmful to the environment (Rabotić, 2010).

The role of entertainer/enjoyer: This refers to the fact that tour guides distract tourists from the routine and make them feel positive emotions, ensuring that tourists have a pleasant time with enjoyable activities and animation activities throughout their travels (Heung, 2008; Toker, 2011; Yetgin, 2017). In this context, tour guides should have qualities such as knowing how to entertain, being extroverted and sociable, and being humorous while undertaking the role of entertaining/having a good time (Ahipaşoğlu, 2001). The tour guide could tell funny stories and jokes while interacting with tourists according to the situation and functioning of the tour (Tsaur & Teng, 2017). Therefore, this can ensure that the tour takes place in a fun atmosphere.

Economic promoter: This role refers to protecting tourism resources economically and providing advice to support the local economy. By establishing the connection between tourists and local people, the tour guide also helps tourists to buy products produced by local people (Ormsby & Mannle, 2006: Çapar & Yenipınar, 2017). It can be said to be of vital importance in increasing the welfare of the host community through the promotion of economic development in tourism, taking into account the needs and benefits of hosts, guests, regional resources and industry (Hu, 2007; Rabotić, 2010).

Sustainable Tourism and its Dimensions

Sustainable tourism is defined by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) as 'tourism that meets the needs of visitors, industry, the environment and the local host community, while taking full account of the economic, social and environmental impact of existing resources now and in the future' (UNEP & WTO, 2005). A sustainable tourism approach aims to protect and utilise natural, socio-cultural and economic resources in the future while providing benefits to the current society. Development in tourism involves providing long-term products without damaging the existing resources of countries (Demir & Çevirgen, 2006). In order for the tourism development of countries to proceed systematically, long-term sustainable goals should be determined by ensuring the support of all participants. Therefore, in order to ensure sustainability in tourism, it is necessary to reveal the environmental, economic or socio-cultural dimensions.

Environmental Dimension: In order to provide the needs of people, all resources are obtained from the natural environment, as well as providing energy from natural ecological systems and transforming substances into economic waste can only be provided from natural resources. Therefore, environmental sustainability is related to the protection of resources in the long term and the transfer of existing resources to future generations (Pearce, 2002; Eser , 2011). The main objectives in the environmental dimension of sustainable tourism are to decrease industrial waste, to use less packaging, and to extend the usage period of products. In addition, reprocessing and reusing waste materials and turning them into glass is important in terms of ensuring effective environmental sustainability (Beatley & Wheeler, 2004).

Socio-cultural dimension: This includes social, cultural and community elements. Social sustainability is possible through systematic social participation and a strong society. Social solidarity, social institutions, cultural identity,

diversity, respect, tolerance, humility, compassion, and love, which all form part of social capital, and socially accepted standards such as honesty, laws and discipline are important elements of social sustainability (Engin & Akgöz, 2013). Social sustainability aims to ensure equal access to available resources from each generation, and to ensure the balance of justice between present generations and future generations, as well as to ensure the balance of justice between present people. In addition, social sustainability considers it necessary to improve the quality of life of people living without basic resources such as clean water and food. This is because not taking social factors into consideration may result in the failure of a sustainable life (Asafu Adjaye, 2005; Öztürk, 2007). What really needs emphasising with the concept of cultural sustainability is not a traditionalist attitude, but a realisation that the past heritage, settlement conditions and principles of countries and communities are a great resource (Cebeci & Çakılcıoğlu, 2002).

Economic dimension: In terms of economy, it aims to minimise the preventive economic losses of consuming renewable resources, ensuring economic growth, consuming and reducing natural resources by calculating the cost of environmental pollution. Economic sustainability aims to increase the level of welfare in all segments of society, to ensure production with the least cost in all economic activities and, at the same time, to obtain maximum benefit. While protecting the natural, historical, cultural and environmental resources that constitute the main source of tourism, sustainable economic growth will be possible by providing a local labour force, increasing income and equal distribution (Şanlıöz Özgen, 2016).

Sustainable Tourism and Tour Guide Roles

It is important for the solution to the problems arising as a result of tourism movements to use the existing resources in a complementary manner and to ensure the sustainability of tourism by spreading tourism throughout the year. In line with sustainable principles, such as the efficient and effective use of tourism resources, all stakeholders in the sector have responsibilities. Of these stakeholders, tour guides are among the important actors.

Being aware of the environmental and socio-cultural impact of tourism, tour guides are effective both in the economic development of the local community and in positively influencing the behaviour of tourists as well as in protecting the natural, cultural and physical environment of the local community. In addition, tour guides educate tourists with their informative role (Weiler & Ham, 2002; Hillman, 2003; Skanavis & Giannoulis, 2009). Therefore, tour guides contribute to ensuring sustainability in tourism by acting as a bridge between the tourists, the natural environment and the public.

In tourism destinations, it is the main duty of the tour guide to realise sustainability goals by shaping the behaviour of visitors in order to minimise all the environmental damage that tourists do without being aware of it. Among the duties and responsibilities of the tour guide, there is behaviour such as exhibiting responsible behaviour between tourists and local people during the tour, preventing natural and cultural destruction, preventing damage to the environment and preventing the carrying capacity of the destination (Poudel & Nyaupae, 2013).

Although environmental awareness is increasing daily in line with sustainable tourism movements (Üzülmez et al. 2023), the negative effects of tourism activities on local people, the environment, culture and economy are extremely high. For this reason, tour guides play a key role in ensuring sustainability in tourism, especially in terms of providing a quality tourist experience and carrying out activities that emphasise the protection of all kinds of

natural, historical and cultural values in the destination, encouraging spending and increasing the welfare level of local people (Weiler & Black, 2015). Tour guides have a multifaceted management area between local people, the environment and culture within the sector they are in.

Therefore, it is of vital importance that tour guides perform their profession with an awareness of their role in ensuring the sustainability of tourism. In fact, while establishing the link between travellers and the visited region, guides also increase satisfaction and create a positive perception environment to ensure continuity (Hu & Wall, 2012). Therefore, the importance of guides in sustainable tourism cannot be denied.

Method

According to Toker (2022), the qualitative research method can explain the research stages and data analysis in detail. In this study, the qualitative research method was adopted to examine the views of tour guides on their role in sustainable tourism. Since the fact that the individuals participating in the study have experience with the phenomenon under study requires in-depth understanding of the essence of the experiences, the phenomenology design was used in the study. In this context, the phenomenology design, which used to understand events and phenomena in qualitative research, was utilised.

Participant Group of the Research

Voluntary individuals who had been working as tour guides for at least one year constituted the participant group of this study. The research data were collected via e-mail and social media between 5 March-16 April, 2024. The total number of participants included in the research consisted of twenty-six people. The data of two participants were not included in the data set because they were not related to the purpose of the research. A total of twenty-six participants were interviewed until data saturation and depth were reached and the data collection process was finalized (Patton, 2014). Participants were coded as P1, P2, P3, ...P26.

Data Collection Tool and the Interview Process

Before starting this study, approval with protocol number 45547 was obtained from Anadolu University Social and University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee. In the study, the interview technique was used as a qualitative research data collection tool. As a result of a literature review conducted by the researcher, an e-interview was created in Google Forms in accordance with the purpose of the research. The research data were collected through the e-interview form. In line with the purpose of the research, questions with regard to the practices of tour guides regarding the economic, socio-cultural and environmental dimensions of sustainable tourism on tours were prioritised. In order to provide the internal validity of the interview form,the exchange of ideas two experts, who were both academicians and tour guides, were consulted and the interview questions were finalised on 15 February, 2024. Pilot interviews were conducted using the face-to-face interview method before e-interviews were conducted. In the pilot interviews, a sufficient number of participants and data saturation could not be reached. In this context, it was decided to obtain the research data through e-interviews with expert opinion.

The question types created in the e-interview form consisted of three parts; demographic questions, questions. Questions were created by utilising Rabotić's (2010) study titled, ‘Tourist guiding from the perspective of sustainable tourism’. The activities related to the socio-cultural, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability in

questions 5, 6, 7 and 8 were created by utilising Tetik's (2017) chapter titled 'Tour guiding in sustainable tourism management'. E-interview questions are given in Table 1.

Table 1. E-interview questions

Demographic Questions
What is your education level?
What is your gender?
How many years of professional experience do you have?
What is the professional chamber of tour guiding you are registered with?
In which regions do you work as a tour guide?
Do you have a specialization? If yes, please indicate your area of specialization.
1. What do you know about sustainable tourism?
2. What can the Union of Turkish Tourist Guides Chambers (TUREB) and the Professional Chambers of Tour Guides do to make tour guides aware of sustainability? What are your suggestions?
3. What kind of practices can the Tourism Guidance Departments of universities carry out other than adding the sustainable tourism course to the curriculum?
4. What kind of sustainable tourism practices can be carried out in the tours you conduct as a tour guide? Explain with examples.
5. What roles do you need to have as a tour guide to contribute to sustainable tourism? Which roles do you fulfill?
6. As a tour guide, what activities do you engage in with group members to contribute to the environmental dimension of sustainability in your tours?
7. As a tour guide, what activities do you engage in with group members to contribute to the socio-cultural dimension of sustainability in your tours?
8. As a tour guide, what activities do you engage in with group members to contribute to the economic dimension of sustainability in your tours?

In this study, the participants were reached by way of social media and e-mail. The participants were asked whether they had worked as guides on tours before. Before the interviews, the participants were informed in regard to the purpose of the interviews, the questions in the e-interview form and the research. Afterwards, explanations were made concerning sustainable tourism and its dimensions to make the subject more understandable. The voluntary participation form was sent by way of e-mail before the interview. All the participants were assured that their personal information and sharing would remain confidential. In this context, the researcher read the interview texts carefully and then transferred the texts to MAXQDA 2024 for data analysis and visualization. The data obtained were coded, then themes were found and the codes and themes were organized. Finally, comments were made on the findings.

Deductive thematic analysis technique was used to analyse the research data. According to this approach, the data obtained are summarised and interpreted according to the themes previously determined based on the research question or sub-questions. The data can be organised according to the themes revealed by the research questions, or they can be presented by considering the questions or dimensions used in the interview process. In deductive analysis, direct quotations are frequently used in order to reflect the views of the interviewees in a striking way (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). According to Toker (2022), thematic analysis is a data analysis technique consisting of the processes of interpreting and reporting the data used in qualitative research methods by creating themes. The main reason why thematic analysis is frequently used is that it is an easy-to-follow technique with certain steps. The codes and themes created by the researcher are largely shaped by current and past readings on the subject, literature review, experience and perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The responses to two similar questions aimed at assessing participants' knowledge and conceptual perception of sustainable tourism have been merged into a single data set to avoid redundancy. A total of 654 codes were obtained in the research. The codes obtained were grouped under sub-codes and codes and the findings were interpreted. The data obtained in the research were analysed by two tour guide

academician experts and a consensus was reached.

Validity and Reliability of the Study

The most frequently used validity and reliability criteria in qualitative research are Lincoln and Guba's (1982) reliability criteria; credibility, consistency, verifiability and transferability. In order to increase the internal validity (credibility) of the research, a conceptual framework was created by reviewing the relevant literature while creating the interview form. In the qualitative data analysis, the themes and sub-themes that make up the themes were checked for compatibility within themselves, and integrity and reality were ensured with expert opinion.In the e-interview, it was stated in the voluntary participation form that the research would be used only for scientific purposes and that the interview would be kept confidential. Therefore, it was ensured that the data collected during the interview process reflected the real situation. In order to ensure the consistency criteria of the research, all the authors were involved in all stages of the data collection and the data analysis process with supervision being carried out.

To ensure the external validity (transferability) criterion of the research, the research process was shared transparently. In this context, the research model, participation group, data collection tool, data collection and data coding process were explained in detail, and the related studies in the literature were discussed by making comparisons. The 'purposive sampling' method was used on the basis of voluntary participation to show events, phenomena and variables. In order to increase the internal validity of the study, all the findings were conveyed directly and objectively without any interpretation.

In order to increase the external reliability (confirmability) of the research, the researcher confirmed all data collection tools, coding, notes and inferences by consulting external expert opinion. A 'diary' was kept to ensure the reliability and validity of the research. It was provided that the research method was used correctly and the appropriate research technique was used. Immediately after the data collection, the data were summarized and opinions on its accuracy were obtained. Expert review critically evaluated the research design, collected data, analysis and interpretation of results.

Findings

In the study, the participants' awareness, practices and suggestions regarding sustainable tourism were evaluated. The findings consist of the following: "Demographic characteristics of the participants", "Awareness towards sustainable tourism"; "Identifying roles for sustainable tourism"; "Practices for socio-cultural dimension of sustainable tourism"; "Practices for the economic dimension of sustainable tourism"; "Practices for the environmental dimension of sustainable tourism"; "Suggestions for sustainable tourism practices in tours" and "Recommendations for sustainable tourism practices"

The themes were supported with direct quotations from the participants' statements. The frequency of the statements related to these codes obtained from the participants' interviews is indicated. In addition, quotations from the most striking sample statements of the participants' interviews were included. As a result of the thematic analysis, seven themes and the number of codes associated with these themes are presented in Table. 2.

Table 2. Frequency of the Total of Expressions of the Themes

Themes	**Frequency of Expression**
Awareness of Sustainable Tourism	**39**
Identifying Roles for Sustainable Tourism	**114**
Practices for Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Sustainable Tourism	**119**
Practices for Environmental Dimensions of Sustainable Tourism	**167**
Practices for the Economic Dimension of Sustainable Tourism Practices	**107**
Suggestions for Sustainable Tourism Practices in Tours	**50**
Recommendations for Sustainable Tourism Practices	**58**
Total	**654**

Findings on the Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Demographic information on the age, gender, education level, years of professional experience, registered chamber and regions where guiding services are provided for the participants interviewed within the content of the research is given in Table 3.

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Participant	**Gender**	**Age**	**Education**	**Experience (Years)**	**Registered Chamber**	**Tour Guide Service Regions**	**Area of Specialization**
P1	Female	42	Undergraduate	15	İRO	Marmara, Aegean, Central Anatolia	No
P2	Female	49	Associate Degree	29	ANRO	National	Ankara, GAP, Black Sea
P3	Female	35	Undergraduate	13	ATRO	Marmara, Aegean	No
P4	Male	28	PhD	5	ARO	National, Abroad	No
P5	Male	48	Undergraduate	7	TRO	Black Sea Region, Central Anatolia	No
P6	Male	45	Undergraduate	7	ŞURO	Southeastern Anatolia, Black Sea Region	Yes
P7	Female	44	Undergraduate	23	İRO	National	Architectural tours, Cultural tours
P8	Female	29	PhD	1	NERO	Central Anatolia, Southeastern Anatolia, Eastern Anatolia	Yes
P9	Female	41	Undergraduate	20	NERO	National	Yes
P10	Female	42	PhD	19	ANRO	National, Abroad	Cultural heritage, Art history, Archaeology, Nature sports
P11	Male	29	Master's Degree	6	ADRO	National	No
P12	Female	45	Master's Degree	2	ARO	Mediterranean, Aegean	No
P13	Male	28	Master's Degree	4	ANRO	National	History of the Middle Ages, History of Anatolian Principalities
P14	Male	42	PhD	4	ANRO	National	No
P15	Male	34	Master's Degree	7	ANRO	National, Abroad	No
P16	Male	32	Undergraduate	6	ARO	National	No
P17	Male	47	Master's Degree	2	İRO	Marmara	No
P18	Male	27	Undergraduate	1	MURO	Aegean	No
P19	Female	50	Undergraduate	27	İRO	National	No
P20	Male	33	Master's Degree	15	ŞURO	National	Yes

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (cont.)

P21	Male	43	Undergraduate	14	BURO	National	No
P22	Female	39	Master's Degree	3	İRO	National	Istanbul Routes, Eastern Roman Empire, Water Architecture, Archaeology
P23	Male	54	Master's Degree	5	İZRO	National	No
P24	Female	35	Master's Degree	3	ANRO	Central Anatolia	No
P25	Female	26	PhD	5	ANRO	Marmara, Central Anatolia, Black Sea	No
P26	Male	31	Master's Degree	6	ATRO	Aegean, Black Sea, Central Anatolia	No

Interviews were conducted with a total of twenty-six people; twelve women and fourteen men. It was determined that the ages of the participants ranged between twenty-six and fifty-four years with the average age being thirty-eight years. The educational status of the participants was distributed as follows: associate degree "1"; Undergraduate "10"; Master's degree "10"; and PhD "5". The participants' years of professional experience ranged from at least one to twenty-nine years.

According to the frequency of repetition they are: Ankara Chamber of Tour guides (ANRO) "7"; Istanbul Chamber of Tour guides (İRO) "5" ; Antalya Chamber of Tour guides (ARO) "3"; Nevşehir Chamber of Tour guides (NERO) "2" ; Şanlıurfa Regional Chamber of Tour guides (ŞURO) "2" ; Aydın Chamber of Tour guides (ATRO) "2" ; Bursa Regional Chamber of Tour guides (BURO) "1" ; Izmir Chamber of Tour guides (İZRO) "1" ; Muğla Chamber of Tour guides (MURO) "1" ; Trabzon Regional Chamber of Tour guides (TRO) "1"; and Adana Regional Chamber of Tour guides (ADRO) "1". When the regions where tour guide services are provided are analyzed, according to the frequency of repetition, these are listed as follows: National "15"; Central Anatolia "6"; Aegean "5"; Marmara "4"; Black Sea "5"; Southeastern Anatolia "2"; Eastern Anatolia "1"; Mediterranean "1", and Abroad "3"

When the findings related to the participants' area of specialization are analyzed, seventeen participants answered "No" and 4 participants answered "Yes". The participants who stated their area of specialization were as follows: P2 "Ankara, GAP, Black Sea"; P7 "Architectural tours, Cultural tours"; P10 "Cultural heritage, Art history, Archaeology, Nature sports"; P13 "History of the Middle Ages, History of Anatolian Principalities"; and P22 "Istanbul Routes, Eastern Roman Empire, Water Architecture, Archaeology". In the light of the data obtained as a result of the e-interviews, themes, sub-themes, codes, frequency of expression and sample expressions are given. In addition, the answers given by the interviewees to the questions are stated with sample expressions in line with the research purpose.

Awareness of Sustainable Tourism

Awareness of the concept of sustainable tourism refers to the level of knowledge of individuals or society about the concept, principles, and practices of sustainable tourism (UNWTO, 2004). Data on sustainable tourism awareness of tour guides were obtained. The codes belonging to this theme are given in Figure 1.

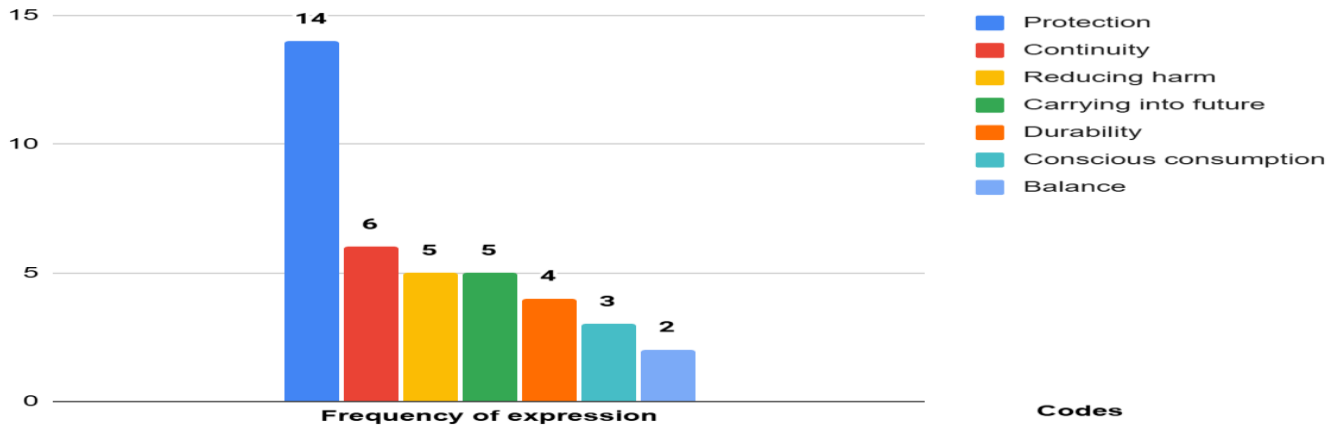

Figure 1. Awareness of Sustainable Tourism Theme

When the sustainable tourism awareness of the participants was analysed, the concept of preservation came to the fore among the statements related to the protection of natural and cultural heritage and values. For example, P21 emphasised the protection of tourism values with the statement "Protecting our tourism values in a way to keep pace with today." Supporting this statement, P5 drew attention to the careful protection of everything in the interaction with the statement "Careful protection of every place and everything we interact with, in short, our environment." Regarding the "Continuity" code, it was emphasised that tourism activities are important for the continuity of tourism activities and the natural environment. In P16's statement "I can say that the continuity should be ensured by minimising the negative effects of tourism and supporting the local economy without harming the natural environment.", it is understood that continuity should be ensured by supporting the local economy. Regarding the "Reducing harm" code, P26 emphasised minimising the damage to the natural environment in his statement as "Not harming the environment and minimising the damages caused by mass tourism." The concept of carrying it to the future was explained by P13 with the expressions "It is the inheritance and carrying of the existing tourism heritage to the future without being destroyed and the future utilisation of the resources subject to tourism." The concept of durability was emphasised by P4 as "Ensuring continuity by using all resources, especially natural assets, in a recyclable manner if it is possible to recycle them, and at a minimal level if it is not possible." In relation to the conscious consumption code, P7 participant used the expressions "It is tourism that evaluates different options from tourism routes to accommodation, which is not consumption-oriented based on environmentalist principles, but consciously focused on promoting nature." Regarding the concept of balance, participant P9 emphasised that balance is aimed with the statements "Sustainable tourism is an approach that aims to manage and balance tourism activities in a way that can meet the needs of current and future generations by maintaining environmental, social and economic balance."

The Identifying Roles for Sustainable Tourism

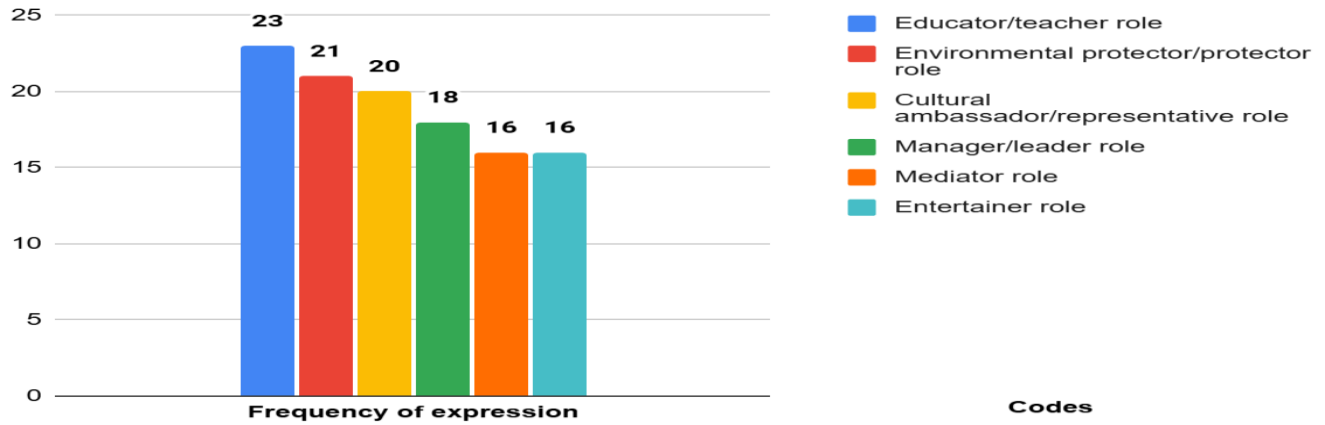

Figure 2. The Theme of Determining The Roles of the Participants Towards Sustainable Tourism

The codes belonging to the theme of determining the roles of the participants towards sustainable tourism are presented in Figure 2. According to the results of the thematic analysis, the most prominent roles are "Educator/teacher role", "Environmental protector/protector role" and "Cultural ambassador/representative role". For example, participant P3 stated that "I not only inform tourists about the destination, but also guide them to pay attention to the balance of conservation and use in line with the sustainable tourism approach." Similarly, participant P7 stated that "I guide tourists about the protection of the environment during the tour and encourage sustainable behaviours." and expressed the informative and environmental protection responsibilities of guides. As for the protection and transfer of cultural heritage, participant P10 said, "I ensure that tourists respect this cultural heritage by conveying the cultural values of the region accurately and effectively." His statement stands out. In addition, it was observed that other roles such as "Manager/leader role", "Mediator role" and "Entertainer role" were also expressed by the participants. Participant P5 drew attention to the roles mentioned in the statement "As a tour guide, while guiding the group effectively, I try to resolve possible cultural or social incompatibilities and use interactive narratives to make the experience enjoyable." Participants emphasised that tour guides should undertake these roles in order to contribute to sustainable tourism. These roles show that tour guides are not only people who convey information, but also actors who manage group dynamics, ensure cultural harmony and enrich the experience.

The Practices for Socio-Cultural Dimension of Sustainable Tourism



Figure 3. The Theme of The Practices For The Socio-Cultural Dimension of Sustainable Tourism

The codes belonging to the theme of practices for the socio-cultural dimension of sustainable tourism are presented in Figure 3. When the frequency of repetition of the codes belonging to this theme was analysed, it was found that the expression preventing damage to historical sites, objects and texture was the most repeated code. P2, one of the participants, used the expression "I make warnings about not touching the objects for the protection of historical sites. It was determined that it is important to encourage the use of public markets and local restaurants." For example, participant P16 supports this with the statement "I encourage tourist groups to shop in the local market by giving them free time." However, the necessity of informing tourists about the general attitude and social rules of the local people was emphasised. Participant P8 expressed his efforts in this direction with the statement "I give warnings about the traditions, customs and social rules of the village people."

The importance of taking measures to prevent possible conflicts between locals and visitors was also mentioned by the participants. For example, P3 reveals her sensitivity on this issue with his statement as "I warn the tour group to prevent tensions between local people and tourists." In addition, it was stated that the use of geographically marked products should be encouraged. Participant P18 shared his approach on this issue by saying, "I recommend local products and geographically marked products for product shopping.' In addition, the importance of visiting the places where community-based projects are carried out was emphasised. Participant P9 expressed her contribution to this issue with the statement "As a tour guide, I include donation-based museums for children in my tours." Finally, it was stated that tourists should be informed about foundations, associations and aid organisations. Participant P16 expressed own individual contribution by saying, "I give short information about social aid organisations to encourage tourists to support disadvantaged groups."

The Practices for the Economic Dimension of Sustainable Tourism

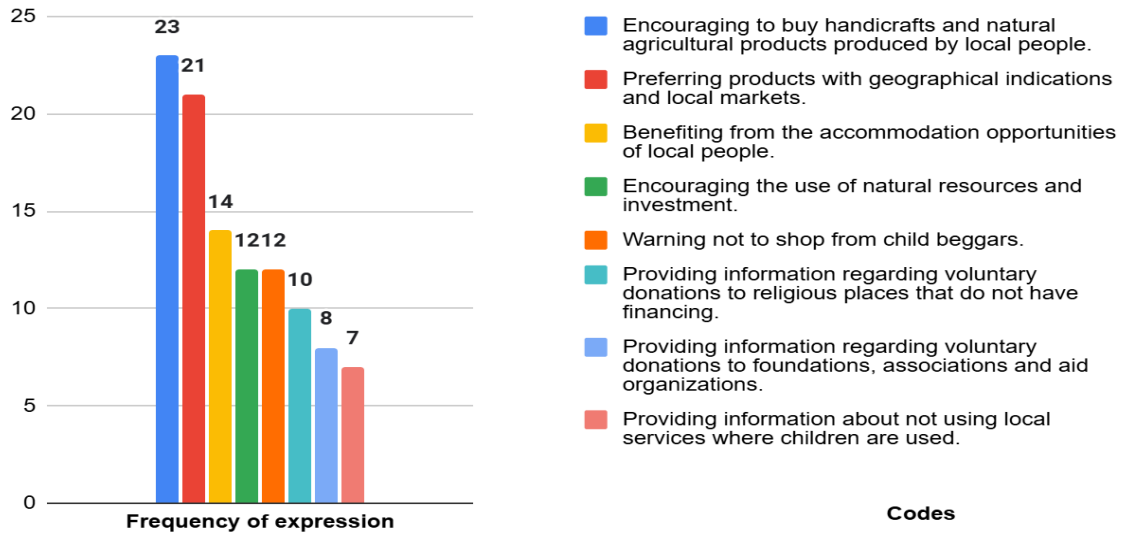

Figure 4. The Theme of Practices For The Economic Dimension of Sustainable Tourism

The codes belonging to the theme of practices for the economic dimension of sustainable tourism are presented in Figure 4. In this context, it was determined that it is important to encourage tourists to buy handicrafts and natural agricultural products produced by local people. Participant P1 stated that he encouraged the preference of local products with the statement "I direct tourists to buy local products and naturally produced products." In addition, it

was emphasised that geographically marked products and local markets should be supported. For example, participant P15 stated that he directs tourists to buy such products with the statement "I encourage local market visits by giving information to the participants about the geographical products of the region." Participants emphasised the importance of making use of the accommodation facilities of local people. In this regard, participant P6 suggested, "In villages and towns, especially local property and accommodation facilities should be preferred." In addition, it was pointed out that sustainable use of natural resources and investments should be encouraged. For example, participant P5 expressed his sensitivity about natural resources with the statement "I draw attention to the use of the natural environment and resources in my tours."

It was also emphasised that child begging should not be encouraged. Participant P3 stated that he raised awareness on the prevention of child abuse with the statement "I warn tourists not to buy anything from young children, especially those who are selling and begging, and not to encourage begging." Participants emphasised that tourists should be informed about voluntary donations to non-financed religious places and charity organisations. Participant P6 conveyed his sensitivity to this issue with the statement "I inform tourists during the tour that they can make voluntary financial donations to charity organisations." Finally, it was emphasised that child labour should not be supported. Participant P21 expressed his efforts to prevent child abuse with the statement "I inform the group not to prefer places where children are employed."

The Practices for the Environmental Dimension of Sustainable Tourism

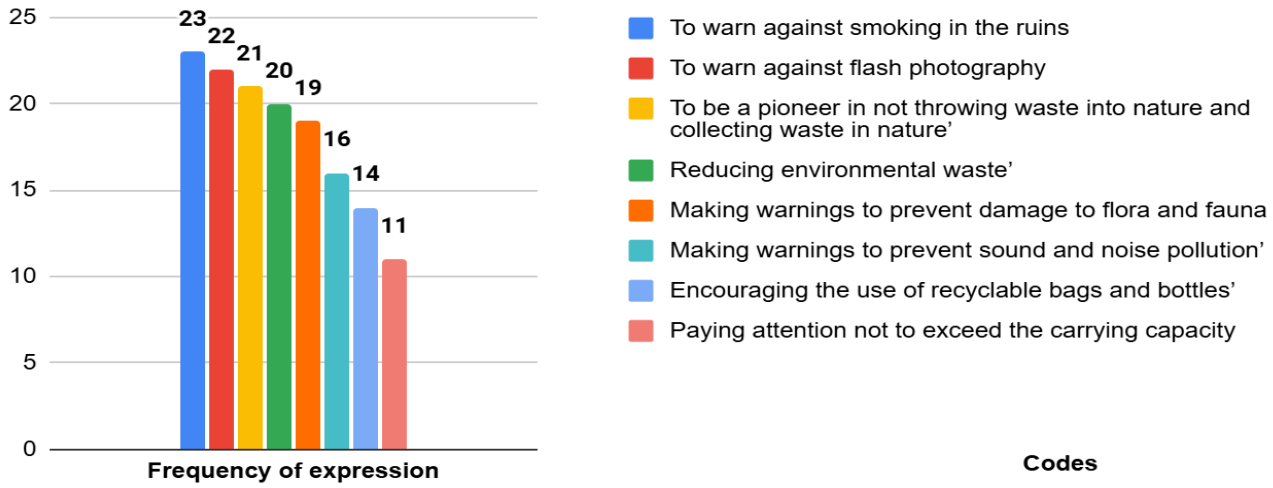

Figure 5. The Theme of The Practices For The Environmental Dimension of Sustainable Tourism

The codes belonging to the theme of practices for the environmental dimension of sustainable tourism are presented in Figure 5. Participants emphasised that various measures should be taken to ensure environmental sustainability. In particular, it was stated that informing visitors about the harms of smoking in archaeological sites is an important practice. In this regard, participant P3 emphasised the necessity of raising awareness with the statement "I inform visitors about the environmental and cultural heritage damages of smoking in archaeological sites." It was also stated that the use of flash photography in museums should be prevented. Participant P7 drew attention to this issue by saying, "I inform tour participants because I know that the use of flash in museums can damage artefacts." Regarding waste management, it was emphasised that waste should not be thrown into nature and the environment should be protected by collecting existing waste. Participant P5 drew attention to the importance of

individual awareness with the statement "I take care to collect garbage during the tour and encourage the use of garbage bins." P3 emphasised that flora and fauna should not be harmed with the following statement: "I state that flowers are more beautiful in their branches on every tour."

In order to prevent sound and noise pollution, participant P10 emphasised the necessity of noise control by saying "I try to speak more quietly in the museum and pay attention to the use of headphones." Within the scope of sustainable tourism, it was suggested to encourage the use of recyclable bags and bottles. Participant P12 stated that sustainable consumption should be supported by saying, "I suggest my guests use recyclable canteens instead of plastic." Finally, it was stated that the carrying capacity of destinations should not be exceeded. Participant P15 drew attention to the importance of capacity management with his statement as "I consider the visitor capacity in tour planning and avoid crowding."

Suggestions for Sustainable Tourism Practices in Tours

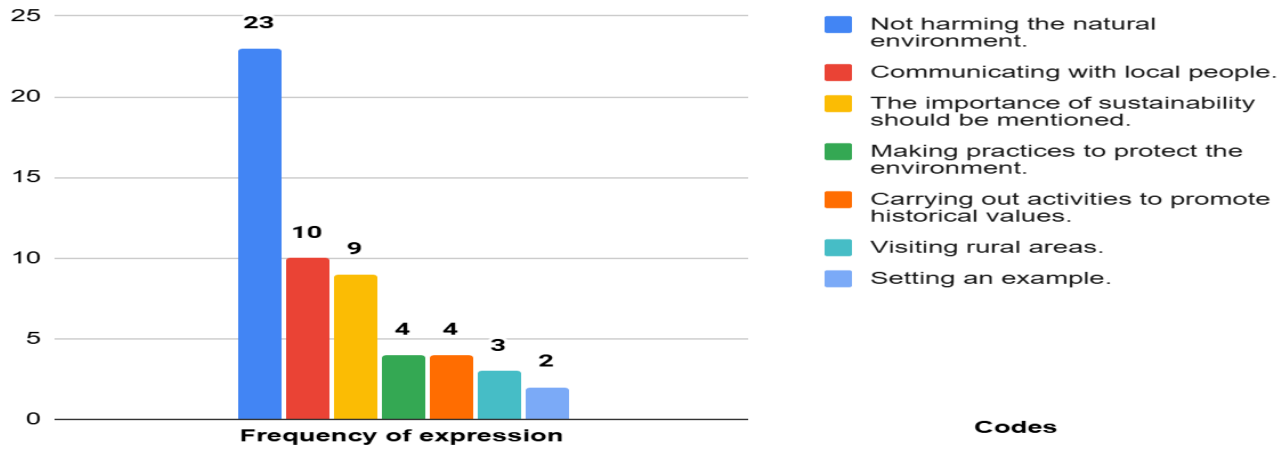

Figure 6. The Theme of Tour Guides' Suggestions For Sustainable Tourism Practices On Tours

The codes belonging to the theme of tour guides' suggestions for sustainable tourism practices on tours are given in Figure 6. When the codes belonging to the theme of tour guides' suggestions for sustainable tourism practices in tours are sorted according to the frequency of repetition, it was determined that the statements related to the code "Not harming the natural environment" were the most common. Among the participants, P14 emphasised that he made warnings about not harming the natural environment with the statement "I make warnings about not harming nature and not throwing rubbish into the environment during tours of natural areas." P7 stated that the reduction of damage to the natural environment should be encouraged by recycling with the statement "Water drinkers instead of water bottle consumption, throwing garbage into recycling, sharing things such as tour programmes via e-mail without printing them on paper." P23, who supports this explanation, mentions practices that can be done without harming the natural environment with the statement preventing the use of plastic bottles.

The importance of communicating with local people was emphasised. Participant P16 emphasised the importance of establishing social relations with local people in the statement "Groups should be in contact with local people as much as possible and try to understand the society." Regarding the code providing information about the importance of sustainability, P18 stated "The importance of sustainability should be mentioned." and emphasised the necessity

of providing information for sustainability. In the statement of P12 related to the code making practices to protect the environment, The participant said "Nature-friendly vehicles can be used. Cable cars, trams, and short tours in nature can be done." The participant stated that the environment should be protected with nature-friendly tools. P21 participant used the expressions "Studies to protect, recognise and promote historical values." about conducting studies to promote historical values.

Participants stated the necessity of visiting rural areas. Participant P12 drew attention to the fact that villages can be opened to public visits with the statements "Visiting tourism to villages and participating in folk entertainment can establish a connection between tourists and the public." In terms of being an example, participant P7 said, "I try to be a role model in protecting the environment and being an example myself with behaviours that do not harm the environment. For example, when I see a water bottle or a small waste on the ground at an archaeological site during a tour, I pick it up and carry it in my hand until I see a garbage can."

Recommendations for Sustainable Tourism Practices

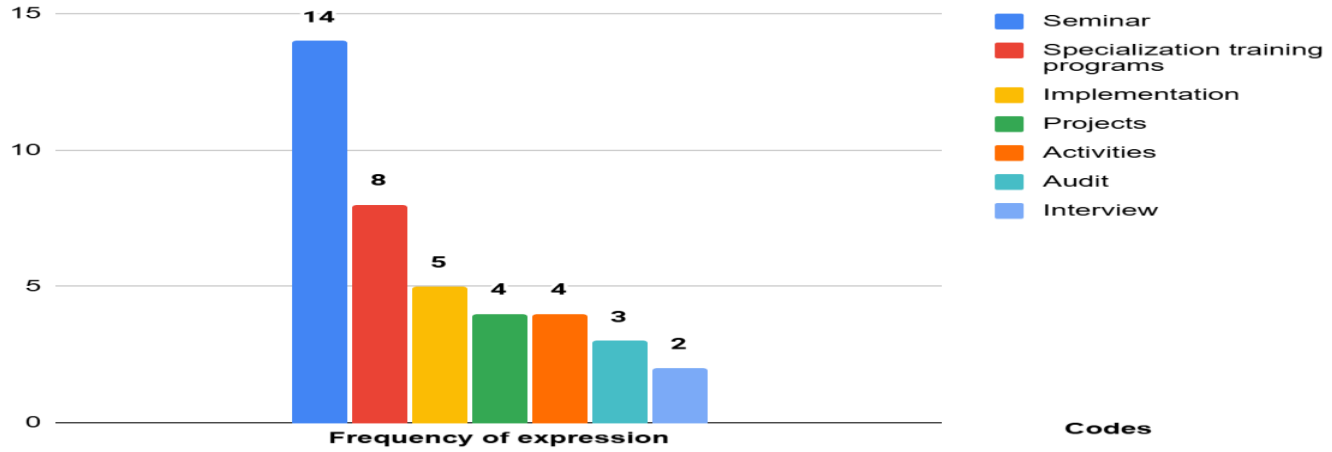

Figure 7. The Theme of the Recommendations For Sustainable Tourism Practices

The codes belonging to the theme of participants' suggestions for tourism practices are given in Figure 7. The most repeated code related to this theme was determined as the seminar. P16 stated that seminars should be organised for awareness in the statement "Seminars should be organised for the awareness of the conscious or unconscious damages to the future of tourism in Türkiye while we continue our lives through tourism, which is the main source of livelihood for all of us." P14 supported this statement by saying "Short seminars should be organised from time to time in order to increase the awareness on sustainability and to keep this concept in the minds of guides." P25, on the other hand, suggested that seminars should be organised in cooperation with universities and the Association of Chambers of Tourist Guides.

Regarding the code specialisation training programmes, P10 drew attention to the necessity of specialisation with the statement "Specialisation training programmes can be opened." P5 related to the implementation code emphasised the necessity of planning practical field visits with the statement "Field visits can be planned for examples of good and bad practices in order to concretise the subject." Participants emphasised the importance of project development. For example, P12 stated that "Project assignments, social experiments can be done." On the other hand, P23 participant emphasised the importance of raising awareness with activities by saying "Activities that will raise

awareness can be done in a region for recycling, cleaning, reducing the use of plastic, and activities in the press with emphasis." Regarding the concept of audit, P3 participant drew attention to the necessity of audit with the statements "First of all, in-house luxury expenditures of institutions should be audited." Finally, the necessity of the interview was stated. P4 participant said, "There should be interviews for participation in the training process and questions about sustainable tourism should be asked."

Conclusion and Discussion

The main purpose of the study is to determine the roles of tour guides within the scope of the tours they undertake regarding the socio-cultural, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable tourism. In addition to the main purpose of the study, the aim was to reveal the practices of tour guides on tours and their awareness of sustainable tourism. When the demographic characteristics of the tour guides who participated in the interview were analyzed, it was determined that twelve of the twenty-six participants were female, and fourteen were male, with an average age of thirty-eight years. In this study, research was conducted with participants of different age ranges and with a wide profile. Considering the educational status of the participants, it was determined that most of the participants had Bachelor's and Master's degrees. The participants' years of professional experience ranged from at least one to twenty years. Therefore, it was determined that the duration of the participants' professional experience is also in a wide range.

Within the scope of the research, the areas of expertise of the tour guides were determined as follows: Ankara; GAP; Black Sea; Architectural tours; Cultural tours; Cultural heritage; Art history; Archaeology; Nature sports; History of the Middle Ages; History of Anatolian Principalities; Personalized Istanbul Routes; Eastern Roman Empire; Water Architecture; and Archaeology. It was determined that the participants interviewed in this study did not have any expertise in sustainable tourism.

The common concept that came to the forefront in the theme of awareness of tour guides regarding sustainable tourism was the expression 'conservation'. The concept of conservation includes the protection and understanding of natural resources that are difficult to reproduce in the world, and the cultural heritage and assets created by human beings. Therefore, it has been revealed that tour guides have a high level of awareness of sustainable tourism by ensuring the protection of natural resources and cultural heritage. When compared with the definition of ensuring the protection of the local economy, natural and cultural heritage by minimizing the negative effects of tourism on society and the environment within the extent of sustainable tourism goals, the fact that the participants made associations with the phrase 'protect' shows that their awareness levels are high.

Hu & Wall (2012) emphasize that the predominant role of tour guides may vary according to the structure of the tour group, the way the trip operates, the conditions of the destination and the wishes of travel agencies. In this study, an attempt has been made to determine the roles of tour guides in sustainable tourism. The participants of this study stated that they assumed an 'educator/instructor role' in sustainable tourism. In the findings of this study, it was determined that the 'educator/teacher role' and the 'knowledge transmitter role' are roles that support each other. This result supports the results of the studies conducted by Güzel et al. (2021), Chowdhary & Prakash (2020), and Çapar & Yenipınar (2017). Unlike the results of this study, there are also studies emphasizing that tour guides fail to educate tourists regarding the environment (Kong, 2014).

In this study, the practice that tour guides pay the most attention to regarding the socio-cultural dimension of sustainable tourism was determined as 'preventing damage to historical sites, objects and textures'. The role of the tour guide regarding the socio-cultural dimension of sustainable tourism was determined as 'environmental protector/protector role'. Weiler and Davis (1993) state that tour guides have responsibilities for protecting the historical and natural environment in the destination. They explain this with the role of resource manager, which is similar to the 'environmental protector/protector role' found in this study.

One of the most important results of this study is that the practice that tour guides pay the most attention to regarding the economic dimension of sustainable tourism is determined to be 'encouraging the purchase of handicrafts and natural agricultural products produced by local people'. It is determined that tour guides assume the 'role of promoting the economy' regarding the economic dimension of sustainability. Tour guides facilitate the development of sustainable tourism (Rabotić, 2010) by assuming the role of promoting the local economy by supporting the regional economy (Güzel et al., 2021). Tătar et al. (2018) emphasize in their study that tour guides encourage tourists to consume local products on tours, and Hu & Wall (2012) and Pereira & Mykletun (2012) emphasize that tour guides support sustainable development goals by contributing to the welfare of local people.

According to the findings obtained in this study, the tour guides stated that they assume the role of 'environmental protector/protector' in the environmental dimension of sustainable tourism and that the practice they pay the most attention to is 'warning about not smoking in ruins'. These findings support the results of studies conducted by Pereira & Mykletun (2012), Weiler & Black (2015), Çapar & Yenipınar (2017), and Tetik Dinç & Güdü Demirbulat (2019). Chowdhary & Prakash (2020) emphasize in their study that tour guides can positively affect the behavior of visitors in combating the major problems brought about by climate change.

The statement 'not harming the natural environment' was found to be the most important element in the suggestions of tour guides for sustainable tourism practices in tours. Weiler and Davis (1993) state in their study that tour guides should exhibit environmentally sensitive behavior in order to contribute to tourists' knowledge and attitude change regarding the sustainability of nature. In addition, it was emphasized by the researchers that they should love nature and living things (Ay & Yetgin, 2020; Yetgin Akgün, Ay & Çalık, 2022). The second element of the study is 'communicating with local people'. Kaya and Ergüven (2021) state in their study that local people are important for tourists to recognize the destination. Tourists who establish meaningful relationships with local people through tour guides can have both more enjoyable experiences and contribute to the protection of natural and cultural heritage (Chowdhary & Prakash, 2020).

Within the scope of this study, it has been determined that the practices of tour guides contribute positively to sustainability. The findings show that tour guide practices significantly impact environmental, economic and social sustainability. According to Scherrer et al. (2011), the tour guide's group management skills and knowledge level positively affect the behavior of visitors and their potential impact on environmental and cultural sites, as well as visitor satisfaction. However, several researchers have concluded that tour guides negatively influence tourists with wrong behavioral patterns and are completely unfamiliar with practical applications for improving sustainability (Gaspar, 2024; Kong, 2014; Weiler & Kim, 2011; Sandaruwani & Gnanapala, 2016). In addition, some studies found that the contribution of tour guides to sustainable tourism is low (Pereira & Mykletun, 2012; Hu, 2007).

Practical Implications

As a result of the research, it was determined that tour guides do not have expertise in the field of education on sustainable tourism practices. In addition, in this study, suggestions were made for Union of Turkish Tourist Guides Chambers (TUREB) and universities to provide face-to-face or online seminars on sustainable tourism practices. In the light of these findings, it is recommended that tour guides should develop their skills in all dimensions of sustainable tourism, raise awareness and receive training in their areas of specialization. This approach will support both their individual development and the sustainability of the tourism sector.

Christie and Mason (2003) emphasize in their study that training and seminars on sustainable tourism should not only improve the knowledge and skills of tour guides, but also bring about a positive change in their attitudes and behavior towards environmentally sensitive activities. For example, those who organize seminars on sustainable tourism could invite local government experts on sustainability and tour guides specializing in ecotourism. For participating tour guides, workshops and seminars where invited speakers will share nature-based education methods are informative. Such events can contribute to improving the interpretation and communication skills of the participants by providing concrete examples of successful practices. They also have the potential to increase their motivation towards sustainable tourism.

On the other hand, it can be suggested that public institutions and universities cooperate and organize awareness training. Training in all dimensions of sustainable tourism could be organized on tourist guiding practice training trips. Trainer tour guides should be role models for the guide candidates by adopting sustainability on the tours during the practice trip. In this way, they could increase both the environmental and cultural awareness of the candidates and encourage them to exhibit positive attitudes and behavior. Therefore, they would contribute both to the protection of destinations and enrich the tourist experiences of the participants on future tours of the tour guide candidates. In addition, tour guides should encourage tourists to consume local products and buy locally produced handicrafts and souvenirs.

Limitations and Future Research

Although the findings of this study contribute significantly to the existing literature, it has several limitations. Based on this, suggestions for future studies have been developed. First of all, the participant group of the study consisted of only tour guides. Therefore, the findings do not apply to other tourism stakeholders, such as travel agencies, destination managers and tourists. For future researchers, the participant group of the study could be expanded with tourism stakeholders, and comprehensive research could be focused on the dimensions of sustainable tourism.

In this study, the sample represented only Türkiye. It is recommended that future studies be applied to tour guides in different countries. Therefore, different results could be obtained by providing a broader perspective with future comparative studies by taking cultural differences into account. Another limitation of this study is that there was not enough time to collect the research data, which was collected over a short period of approximately two months between 5 March and 16 April, 2024. To observe the changes in the effects of tour guides on sustainable development over time, it is recommended to conduct long-term studies in the future. By this means, more comprehensive insights into the trends and changes in tourists' behavior can be obtained.

A further limitation of the study is that the research data was collected through questions created in Google Forms. In future studies, it is suggested to conduct face-to-face interviews to obtain deeper information about the practices of tour guides regarding sustainable tourism. This study did not collect data from tour guide students. In future studies, the awareness of tour guide candidates regarding the economic, socio-cultural and environmental dimensions of sustainability and the roles they undertake could be examined in tour guiding practice training trips. Another limitation of the study is that only the qualitative data analysis method was used. To provide a more comprehensive analysis of this issue, it may be recommended using mixed method approaches combining qualitative and quantitative data in future research.

Declaration

All the authors of the article contributed equally to the article process. The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare. In order to collect the data used in this study, approval was obtained from the Anadolu University Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee, protocol number 455473.

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Appendix 1. Ethics Committee Permission



Evrak Kayıt Tarihi: 14.12.2022 | Protokol No: 455473

Tarih: 27.12.2022

ANADOLU ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL VE BEŞERÎ BİLİMLER BİLİMSEL ARAŞTIRMA VE YAYIN ETİĞİ KURULU
KARAR BELGESİ

ÇALIŞMANIN TÜRÜ:	BAP Projesi-Yüksek Lisans Tez Çalışması
KONU:	Sosyal Bilimler
BAŞLIK:	Turist Rehberlerinin Sürdürülebilir Turizmdeki Rolleri
~~PROJE~~/TEZ YÜRÜTÜCÜSÜ:	Doç. Dr. Duygu YETGİN AKGÜN
TEZ YAZARI:	Ayşegül AŞÇI
ALT KOMİSYON GÖRÜŞÜ:	-
KARAR:	Olumlu