

# TOUR GUIDING SKILLS OF TOURIST GUIDES IN PIAT AND PENABLANCA: BASIS FOR POLICY RECOMMENDATION

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## ABSTRACT

Cagayan Valley (Region II) was found to be rich in tourist attractions that supported regional economic development. The quality of service provided by these sites depended on service standards, well-trained guides, and tourist feedback. This study examined the profile of local tourist guides in terms of age, education, sex, ethnicity, languages spoken, and guiding status. It also assessed the tour guiding skills of guides in Region II as evaluated by both tourists and the guides themselves and identified training needs for guides in the popular sites of Penablanca and Piat. Additionally, it explored differences in guiding skills based on profile variables. Using a descriptive-correlation design, the study involved 23 respondents from Piat and Penablanca, Cagayan. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire adapted from Hoang Le Nguyen (2015). Results showed that, despite relatively low formal education, the guides demonstrated high skill levels, suggesting a promising future for local tourism. However, they still needed further training in Mandarin and English, first aid, and local culture and history. Notably, problem-solving skills varied by education level and ethnicity, while interpersonal, communication, decorum, and organizational skills differed by language and guiding status. This study recommended that the Department of Tourism adopt policies for ongoing professional development to enhance the competence of Region II's tourist guides, potentially boosting tourism in Cagayan Valley.

**Keywords :** tour guiding, tourist guides, tour guiding skills

## INTRODUCTION

A tourist guide is a person who guides groups or individual visitors on a tour around natural and cultural heritage sites or other attractions, and who interpret these places, in a language of the visitor's choice, often in an inspiring and entertaining manner. They are considered front liners in the tourism industry. The quality of service provided is derived from two basic fundamental principles - the respect for visitors of their own particular culture and traditions and respect for their own specific part of the common cultural heritage. Tourist guides have to inform enthusiastically and entertainingly as they share the riches of our natural and cultural heritage.

Fundamentally, a warm welcome is assured by courteous, smiling, appropriately dressed and punctual guides who are ever conscious of the well-being of the visitor. Tourist guides should be able to communicate correctly, provide up to date information and possess interpersonal and communications skills. He should possess thorough academic and vocational training to improve professional performance in guiding visitors without losing sight of the very purpose of the visit. The principles of professional integrity and discretion are applied without fail within the framework of all engagements.

It is the responsibility of the tourist guide to help travelers understand the culture of the region and the way of life of its inhabitants. They have to promote the cultural and natural heritage and at the same time impress on the visitors the significance of the place they are visiting. As such, a tourist guide should have strong communication skills, improvisational skills, enthusiastic, humorous, punctual, friendly, good physical fitness, responsible and honest and a keen sense of direction.

No matter how much training one gets, and no matter how much experience one has, one can only be a successful tour guide if he/she possesses specific natural skills and talents. The ability to get on well with people is the most important factor above all other skills. Tourist guides should love and care about people, enjoy their company and get on with everyone.

People skills are at the fore of the touring industry as they will be working with all kinds of people every day. The tours eventually get mundane and can become boring if they visit the same museum over and over again, but it is the people who change and make it interesting, and in turn they have to show them that they are just as interested as they are by the sights and attractions that they are showing them. Remember this is probably the first time, they have ever seen these attractions, so their job is to be excited with them, and make them feel comfortable.

The most important skills that one needs to have and develop to become a tour guide are excellent public speaking and narration skills. A tourist guide should understand the basic principles of public speaking in order to be more comfortable with addressing people in a relaxing and engaging way. They should learn how to speak clearly, how to project their voice, how to talk calmly and slowly so that people can understand them, and also learn how to control their breathing so that they don't get tired. Story telling is one of the key elements of guiding tours,

especially in historically significant towns or areas where lots of interesting events have taken place. Narration is all about being enthusiastic, capturing their audience's attention and allowing the tourists to feel as though they are part of the story. One important part of narrating to people is to not overwhelm them with facts and figures. Dates are important to know, but it is not interesting for people to listen to lists of dates. Rather make it more interesting by formulating a story around it. As explained by Anderson (2017), tourist guides should find stories around the sights or areas that they are showing. It doesn't have to be long, just a line or two, but something that will capture people's attention and imagination. They say that for instance instead of listing dates that certain structures were built, they could rather tie in the building of a monument with other things that happened in history such as the ending of a war and fascinating facts.

Kady (2018), mentioned that the skills of tourist guides are divided into three distinct areas; interpersonal, technical skills and product knowledge.

Cagayan Valley or Region 02 is abound with tourist spots which contributes to the economic development of the region. The manner this tourist spots provide quality service to their clients depends on the service quality maintenance, properly trained tourist guides, and appropriate feedbacks from tourists. Tourist guides who serve as ambassadors of goodwill play a vital role and can take a significant step to the satisfaction of foreign as well as domestic tourists (Mohamad Khani, 2008).

From the above premises, this study was conceived to look into the skills of tourist guides in Penablanca and Piat, Cagayan as basis for policy recommendation to improve the quality of service to be provided to tourists.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to assess the tour guiding skills of local tour guides to propose policy enhancements for tourist guiding in Penablanca, Cagayan. Specifically, it sought to determine the profile of local tourist guides in terms of age, highest educational attainment, sex, ethnicity, language spoken, and status as a tour guide. I also determined the level of tour guiding skills of participants as assessed by both tourists and the guides themselves. It also elicited the training needs of local tourist guides. Additionally, the study investigated whether there is a significant difference in the levels of tour guiding skills of participants when grouped according to their profile variables. Finally, the study aimed to propose policy enhancements for tour guiding in Region II.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study utilized the descriptive survey research design. This design was used to describe the profile of the participants in terms of age, highest educational attainment, sex, ethnicity, language spoken and status of tourist guides. It also described the level of tour guiding skills of tour guides as well as their training needs. This design likewise relates the level of tour guiding skills of the participants when grouped according to their profile variables. This study was conducted in Cagayan, particularly in Penablanca, and Piat. The participants of the study were the local tourist guides and tourists. For local tourist guides, total enumeration was used as sampling procedure while accidental sampling was used for tourists. This technique was used for the convenience of the researcher considering her resources. The tourists involved as participants were selected based on the following criteria: they were present during the time of visit, they availed the services of tourist guides, they stayed in the tourist destination for at least 24 hours, and they come from another municipality.

The primary tool used in gathering the needed data was the structured questionnaire which was adapted from Hoang Le Nguyen (2015) in his study entitled "The impacts of Tour Guide Performance on foreign tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty in Vietnam."

The items from this questionnaire were categorized into the different skills which included intrapersonal skills, decorum skills, communication skills, problem solving skills and organizational skills. The categorization was validated by experts in the field. This was compared to the Self-Assessment Guide for Local Guiding Services NC II of TESDA. Informal interviews were likewise conducted to supplement the data to be gathered. A request letter was forwarded to the Provincial Governor and Municipal Mayors for their approval. After proper communication with concerned authorities and upon approval of the letter, the researcher furnished a copy to the tourist spot operators for the conduct of the study. Before this, the purpose of the study was explained to the participants of the study in order to seek their full cooperation during the conduct of the study. The researcher also discussed the content of the consent form to the participants, that their names are kept confidential and nothing is attributed to them. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire for 100% retrieval. Before this, an endorsement from the Department of Tourism Regional Office 2 and approval from the National Commission on Indigenous People were sought.

To interpret the data gathered, several tools were used. Frequency and percentage analysis was applied to assess the profile of participants and the training needs of local tourist guides in various tourist spots across selected provinces in Region II. Additionally, the weighted mean was used to determine the level of tour guiding skills of the participants.

### RESULTS

The following results have been obtained.

**Table 1.** Frequency and percentage distribution of participants according to Profile Variables

| Age                            | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 11-20                          | 13        | 56.52      |
| 21-30                          | 7         | 30.43      |
| 31-40                          | 3         | 13.04      |
| Total                          | 23        | 100.00     |
| Highest Educational Attainment | Frequency | Percentage |
| High School Undergraduate      | 8         | 34.78      |
| High School Graduate           | 6         | 26.09      |
| College Undergraduate          | 4         | 17.39      |
| College Graduate               | 5         | 21.74      |
| Technical/Vocational           | 1         | 4.35       |
| Total                          | 23        | 100.00     |
| Sex                            | Frequency | Percentage |
| Male                           | 16        | 69.57      |
| Female                         | 7         | 30.43      |
| Total                          | 23        | 100.00     |
| Ethnicity                      | Frequency | Percentage |
| Itawes                         | 23        | 100.00     |
| Total                          | 23        | 100.00     |
| Language Spoken                | Frequency | Percentage |
| Filipino                       | 23        | 100.00     |

| <b>Total</b>        | <b>23</b> | <b>100.00</b> |
|---------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Current Employment  | Frequency | Percentage    |
| Tourist Guide       | 7         | 30.43         |
| Government Employee | 1         | 4.35          |
| Total               | 8         | 34.78         |

It shows that the majority of individuals are in the 11-20 age group, followed by the 21-30 age group, and then the 31-40 age group, which has the lowest representation.

For educational attainment, the highest number of respondents, accounting for 34.78% of the total, have an educational background at the High School Undergraduate level. Following closely, 26.09% of the participants are High School Graduates. Those with a College Undergraduate degree constitute 17.39% of the group, while 21.74% are College Graduates. The smallest segment, comprising 4.35% of the participants, consists of individuals with a Technical/Vocational education.

For sex, out of the total sample of 23 individuals, the majority, accounting for 69.57%, are male. On the other hand, females make up 30.43% of the group, which is a smaller proportion compared to males. These numbers reveal a gender disparity within the surveyed population. Males are more represented, with almost twice the number of individuals compared to females. This could imply either a natural imbalance within the sample or a reflection of broader gender dynamics within the specific context under consideration.

The ethnicity listed is Itawes, with a frequency of 23 individuals, accounting for 100% of the total population being considered. This indicates that all individuals in the dataset belong to the Itawes ethnic group.

The language spoken by the individuals surveyed is Filipino. The frequency count reveals that all 23 individuals in the sample speak Filipino, representing 100% of the total population considered. This implies that Filipino is the only language spoken within this specific group, with no other languages being represented.

The current employment status of the surveyed individuals is represented by two categories: Tourist Guide and Government Employee. The frequency count reveals that 7 out of the 23 individuals in the sample are employed as Tourist Guides, accounting for 30.43% of the total population considered. On the other hand, there is only one individual, representing 4.35% of the total population, who works as a Government Employee.

**Table 2.** Interpersonal skills of tourist guide as assessed by themselves and the tourists.

| Interpersonal Skills the tourist guide... | Tour Guides | Tourists | Mean | Int. |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------|----------|------|------|
|-------------------------------------------|-------------|----------|------|------|

|                                                   | Mean | Int.      | Mean | Int.      | Mean | Int.      |
|---------------------------------------------------|------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-----------|
| is friendly.                                      | 3.71 | Very High | 3.68 | Very High | 3.70 | Very High |
| is able to meet psychological needs of tourist.   | 3.49 | Very High | 3.34 | Very High | 3.42 | Very High |
| is willing to help tourist.                       | 3.78 | Very High | 3.65 | Very High | 3.72 | Very High |
| understand the culture of customers I am serving. | 3.44 | Very High | 3.42 | Very High | 3.43 | Very High |
| is able to generate rapport among tour's members. | 3.43 | Very High | 3.45 | Very High | 3.44 | Very High |
| Category Mean                                     | 3.57 | Very High | 3.51 | Very High | 3.54 | Very High |

Table 2 shows the assessment of the tourists and tour guides themselves on the interpersonal skills of the tourist guides. As gleaned from the table, the highest mean score of 3.78 indicates that most of the participants rated themselves “very high” on their willingness to help tourists and “very high” on their being friendly with a weighted mean of 3.71. This finding conforms to the assessment of the tourists where both interpersonal skills were rated “very high” with corresponding weighted means of 3.65 and 3.68. In general, the tourist guides rated themselves “very high” on the following interpersonal skills: able to meet psychological needs of tourist, understand the culture of customers they serve and able to generate rapport among tour's members. The same is true to the assessment of the tourists where all the above-mentioned interpersonal skills were rated “very high”.

The category mean of 3.57 further indicates that all the interpersonal skills as reflected in the table are rated “very high” by the tour guides themselves and the tourists likewise rated the tour guides “very high” on all the above-mentioned interpersonal skills. Furthermore, the group mean of 3.54 reflects that the interpersonal skills of the participants is “very high”.

**Table 3.** Decorum skills of tourist guides as assessed by themselves and the tourists

| Decorum Skills                                                                              | Tour Guides |           | Tourists |           | Mean | Int       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|----------|-----------|------|-----------|
|                                                                                             | Mean        | Int.      | Mean     | Int.      |      |           |
| the tourist guide...                                                                        |             |           |          |           |      |           |
| 1. makes sure that my clothes and appearance are neat and appropriate for the tour activity | 3.60        | Very High | 3.51     | Very High | 3.56 | Very High |
| 2. is polite                                                                                | 3.64        | Very High | 3.63     | Very High | 3.64 | Very High |
| 3. is honest and reliable.                                                                  | 3.76        | Very High | 3.67     | Very High | 3.72 | Very High |
| 4. possesses good personality.                                                              | 3.60        | Very High | 3.59     | Very High | 3.60 | Very High |
| 5. have good health.                                                                        | 3.69        | Very High | 3.56     | Very High | 3.63 | Very High |
| 6. shows passion of my work.                                                                | 3.68        | Very High | 3.59     | Very High | 3.64 | Very High |
| 7. shows a sense of responsibility.                                                         | 3.66        | Very High | 3.62     | Very High | 3.64 | Very High |
| 8. takes good care of tourists' needs.                                                      | 3.72        | Very High | 3.43     | Very High | 3.58 | Very High |
| Category Mean                                                                               | 3.67        | Very High | 3.58     | Very High | 3.63 | Very High |

One of the most important decorum skills of a tour guide is being honest and reliable just as what others would possess in other forms of work. In this particular study, as reflected in table 9, most of the participants rated themselves “very high” as being honest and reliable and take good care of tourists needs with weighted means of 3.76 and 3.72 in that order. Similar result was found on the assessment of the tourists that tour guides are honest

and reliable with mean assessment of 3.72. Other decorum skills as contained in the table were rated “very high” by both the tourist and the participants themselves.

The category mean of 3.67 for the participants and 3.58 for the tourists generally reflect that the decorum skills of the tour guides is “very high”.

**Table 4.** Communication skills of tourist guides as assessed by themselves and the tourists

| Communication Skills the tourist guide...                                  | Tour Guides | Tourists  | Mean |           | Int. |           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-----------|
|                                                                            | Mean        | Int.      | Mean | Int.      |      |           |
| is fluent in the language of the tour group.                               | 3.24        | High      | 3.53 | Very High | 3.39 | Very High |
| is good at communication.                                                  | 3.42        | Very High | 3.62 | Very High | 3.52 | Very High |
| performs well in commentary with proper voice modulation and pronunciation | 3.44        | Very High | 3.48 | Very High | 3.46 | Very High |
| shows good sense of humor.                                                 | 3.54        | Very High | 3.52 | Very High | 3.53 | Very High |
| Category Mean                                                              | 3.42        | Very High | 3.54 | Very High | 3.48 | Very High |

Table 4 reflects the assessment of the two groups of participants of the communication skills of tour guides. As shown in the table, tour guides rated themselves “very high” on being good at communication, perform well in commentary with proper voice modulation and pronunciation and show good sense of humor with corresponding weighted means of 3.44, 3.44 and 3.54 respectively. However, they rated themselves “high” in their being fluent in the language of the tour group. On the contrary, tourists rated the tour guides “very high” on this aspect with a weighted mean of 3.39.

Generally, both the participants and the tourists rated the participants “very high” in their communication skills with category means of 3.42 and 3.54 respectively and a group mean of 3.48.

**Table 5.** Problem solving skills of tourist guides as assessed by themselves and the tourists

| Problem Solving Skills The Tourist Guide...                                        | Tour Guides |           | Tourists |           | Mean | Int.      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|----------|-----------|------|-----------|
|                                                                                    | Mean        | Int.      | Mean     | Int.      |      |           |
| 1. is able to handle customers' complaints.                                        | 3.39        | Very High | 3.49     | Very High | 3.44 | Very High |
| 2. is capable in solving any problems and conflicts emerged from tour arrangement. | 3.32        | Very High | 3.44     | Very High | 3.38 | Very High |
| 3. is able to cope with unexpected and urgent incidents                            | 3.36        | Very High | 3.47     | Very High | 3.42 | Very High |
| 4. is able to reconcile historical arguments among tourist.                        | 3.33        | Very High | 3.46     | Very High | 3.40 | Very High |
| 5. I show sound judgment in historical arguments with tourist.                     | 3.24        | High      | 3.35     | Very High | 3.30 | Very High |
| Category Mean                                                                      | 3.33        | Very High | 3.45     | Very High | 3.39 | Very High |

Table 5 reflects the problem-solving skills of participants as assessed by the tourists and tour guides. As presented in the table, the highest weighted mean of 3.39 manifests that most of the tour guides rated themselves “very high” on their capability to handle customers' complaints. They likewise rated themselves “very high” on their capability in solving any problems and conflicts emerging from tour arrangement, ability to cope with unexpected and urgent incidents, and ability to reconcile historical arguments among tourists. However, they rated themselves “high” in showing sound judgment in historical arguments with tourists with a mean of 3.24.

On the assessment of the tourists on the problem-solving skills of tour guides, all the skills as indicated in the table were rated “very high” with a category mean of 3.45 which is higher than the category mean for tour guides which is 3.33.

Overall, the group mean of 3.39 further shows that both groups of participants rated the tour guides “very high” in their problem-solving skills. This is a reflection that tour guides were able to handle issues and problems related to tour guiding.

**Table 6.** Organizational Tour Skills of the tourist guides as assessed by themselves and the tourists

| Organizational Tour Skills The Tourist Guides... | Tour Guides | Tourists | Mean |      | Int. |  |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------|----------|------|------|------|--|
|                                                  | Mean        | Int.     | Mean | Int. |      |  |



|                                                                                             |      |           |      |           |      |           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-----------|
| have a knowledge of the destination's culture and history.                                  | 3.56 | Very High | 3.60 | Very High | 3.58 | Very High |
| have knowledge of local people's lifestyle.                                                 | 3.43 | Very High | 3.45 | Very High | 3.44 | Very High |
| introduces local food and other products to tourist.                                        | 3.50 | Very High | 3.34 | Very High | 3.42 | Very High |
| discuss and follow the itinerary and schedule of activities.                                | 3.63 | Very High | 3.55 | Very High | 3.59 | Very High |
| are good at time management.                                                                | 3.56 | Very High | 3.63 | Very High | 3.60 | Very High |
| can organize tour related activities.                                                       | 3.49 | Very High | 3.58 | Very High | 3.54 | Very High |
| are able to cooperate with other staff (e.g., driver).                                      | 3.61 | Very High | 3.62 | Very High | 3.62 | Very High |
| have knowledge to keep environment clean during a tour.                                     | 3.73 | Very High | 3.63 | Very High | 3.68 | Very High |
| remind tourists of environmental protection issues.                                         | 3.70 | Very High | 3.60 | Very High | 3.65 | Very High |
| remind tourists of safety issues.                                                           | 3.76 | Very High | 3.66 | Very High | 3.71 | Very High |
| introduce reliable shops to tourist like: (Souvenir shops, Pasalubong centers, Restaurants) | 3.54 | Very High | 3.49 | Very High | 3.52 | Very High |
| Category Mean                                                                               | 3.59 | Very High | 3.56 | Very High | 3.58 | Very High |

Organizational skill is the ability to use one's time, energy, resources, etc. in an effective way so that one achieves the things one wants to achieve: Self-discipline and organizational skills are crucial to success in any profession. As shown in Table 6, tourist guides rated themselves "very high" in their knowledge of the destination's culture and history, knowledge of local people's lifestyle, introduce local food and other products to tourist, discuss and follow the itinerary and schedule of activities, good at time management, can organize tour-related activities, able to cooperate with other staff, have knowledge to keep environment clean during a tour and remind tourists of environmental protection issues. Similar result was found on the assessment of the tourist on the above-mentioned organizational tour skills with a category mean of 3.60. The group mean of 3.65 further shows that both participants of the study have the same assessment which is "very high". This finding manifests the ability of the tourist guides to properly organize, coordinate, direct and arrange tour destinations.

**Table 7.** Summary of Skills of the tourist guides as assessed by themselves and the tourists

| Skills                     | Tour Guides | Tourists  | Mean |           | Int. |           |
|----------------------------|-------------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-----------|
|                            | Mean        | Int.      | Mean | Int.      |      |           |
| Interpersonal Skills       | 3.57        | Very High | 3.51 | Very High | 3.54 | Very High |
| Decorum Skills             | 3.67        | Very High | 3.58 | Very High | 3.63 | Very High |
| Communication Skills       | 3.42        | Very High | 3.54 | Very High | 3.48 | Very High |
| Problem Solving Skills     | 3.33        | Very High | 3.45 | Very High | 3.39 | Very High |
| Organizational Tour Skills | 3.59        | Very High | 3.56 | Very High | 3.58 | Very High |

This table presents the summary evaluation of tourist guides and tourists of the tourist guiding skills of tourist guides themselves. As gleaned from the table, all the skills such as interpersonal, decorum, communication, problem-solving, and organizational tour skills are rated "very high" by both the tourists and tourist guides.

## DISCUSSION

The very high interpersonal skills of the participants affirm the idea that tourist guides are required to have excellent interpersonal skills to interact with both group and individual travelers. These skills are also known as social skills or people skills. Tour guides develop these interpersonal skills and gain qualities such as being confident and charismatic because these qualities are often endearing and appealing to travelers.

Such finding reveals that the tour guides are imbued with decorum skills. Accordingly, a tourist guide must win and sustain the trust of the small group he takes care of when on travel. A tour guide is one who readily answers to the queries put forth by the small group of people he or she has to mentor and guide.

According to Khornjamnong, (2017), he found out that tour guides possess trustworthiness and caring attitude for their clients. Tour guides who have these qualities will necessarily lead a trip successfully. In the tour managers' opinions, tour guides should show professionalism in their field in order to satisfy their customers. They also feel

that if tour guides appear neat and tidy, are good-looking and have a sense of humor and a pleasant voice, they can make tourists feel good and trust them at first impression.

Results of the study corroborate the idea of Khornjamnong, (2017), who said that tour guides when communicating with tourists should possess a good sense of humor and a pleasant voice, they can make tourists feel good and trust them at first impression. However, tour guide should judge from the characteristics of the group how much humor to use.

Tourist guides need to communicate effectively. It is of utmost importance that travelers understand the information and ideas shared by them. An important part of the communication skills for tour guides is having open communication. For communication to be successful, always encourage open communication. One can have open communication by engaging to his/her travelers, asking questions, inviting their feedback and point of view. Do not use a convincing or superior tone as open communication means accepting the different point of views. This will help to increase understanding of the different type of travelers you meet. It will also help to collect more knowledge about different culture, places and things, thus improving oneself as a tourist guide.

Listening is an important part of the communication skills for tour guides. Of course, as tour guides, one cannot be only listening as it is his/her job to guide and tell stories to your group.

Tourist guides always have a lot to say and eager to share. However, at times, their travelers might not be native English speakers. Also, they might be tired from all the travelling and have a short attention span. Therefore, always remember the 5Cs and KISS. Keep the information and storytelling clear, concise, correct, complete and concrete

Moreover, tourist guides have the ability to transform the tourist visit into an unforgettable experience. In addition to the quality and ability of tourist guides, there are many problems and issues associated with their services that can impact on the ultimate satisfaction of the tourists.

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

The foregoing findings relate with Heung (2008) revealing that it is imperative that guides prioritize tourists' needs and interests first in providing superior value of services and enhancement of the overall tourist experience. The foregoing findings affirm the concept that critical tour leadership and management skills include the ability to organize and handle tourist groups, coordination of affiliated vendors and suppliers of goods and services, time management, scheduling and logistics, and day-to-day problem solving. Tourist groups typically comprise a diverse range of individuals from many walks of life and varied backgrounds, thus the ability of tourist guides to arrange tour destinations is very necessary.

Overall, the finding conveys that tourist guides of the region possess all the essential and desirable skills in tourist guiding. Possessing skills may be translated into a more efficient and effective handling of tourist in Piat and Penablanca which is critical in enticing more tourists to come for travel and leisure.

#### **Training Needs of Tourist Guides**

Among the training needs, the following are identified. They need training on foreign language specifically along Mandarin and English. According to the tourist guides, this need is driven by the increase of foreign tourists, topped by Chinese visitors followed by Americans visiting the tourist spots. They have difficulty communicating with the foreign tourists especially the Chinese tourists since they do not know how to speak in English, hence the need for training on mandarin. Their need for training for English language is to improve their communication skills. First aid training is also needed, followed by culture and history. The need for first aid training was identified in order to provide them the skill to respond to emergency cases particularly during adventure activities like trekking, spelunking, mountaineering and caving. The training on history and culture will enable them to convey historical and cultural information since they are the front liners who should answer queries of tourists regarding culture and history.

They also need training on tour package and on tourism laws. Tour package training helps them promote the tourist destination through a well-designed tour package and the training on tourism laws will help them understand the legal aspect of tourism through the information that will be given to them. As tour guides, they should be well-informed of the legal implications of any decision done in the tourism world.

It is found out that there is a difference in the problem-solving skills of tourist guides when grouped according to highest educational attainment. Similar to other tourist guiding skills earlier, the problem-solving skills of tourist guides differ when they are grouped according to highest educational attainment. This implies that the level of education is a factor in the problem-solving skills of tourist guides. This is supported by the study of Beyazsaceli(2016). It has been observed that students, who have relatively higher school successes, have relatively higher levels of problem solving skills as well.

It is also seen that interpersonal, decorum, communication and organizational skills have P-values higher than 0.05 level of significance which means that the null hypothesis is accepted. However, the problem-solving skills of the tourist guides have P-value of 0.004 which is less than 0.05 margin of error; hence, their problem-solving skills differ when they are grouped according to highest educational attainment.

Statistical analysis reveals a significant difference in the problem-solving skills of tourist guides when grouped according to ethnicity. In this case Ilocanos manifest higher level of problem-solving skills than their counterpart. This statistical difference may be attributed to the fact that there are more Ilocano than non-Ilocano participants in the study.

Results show that there is a significant difference in the interpersonal skills of tourist guides when grouped according to language spoken. The chi-square value of 15.76 and probability value of 0.003 indicates that the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that tourist guides differ in their interpersonal skills when grouped according to language spoken.

This skill varies from one person to another particularly of tour guides coming from different provinces due to differences in the manner they speak and language used. Tour guides need excellent interpersonal skills to interact with both group and individual travelers. These skills are also known as social skills or people skills. Develop these interpersonal skills for tour guides, and you can gain qualities such as being confident and charismatic. These qualities are often endearing and appealing to travelers.

The decorum skills of tourist guides differ significantly when grouped according to language spoken thus rejecting the hypothesis which states: "There is a significant difference in the tour guiding skills of tour guides when grouped according to profile variables".

As tourists vary from time to time, the need for tourist guides to be multilingual is a necessity. However, learning or shifting from one language to another would mean that one may behave differently depending on which language they are speaking.

While tourist guides have specific language spoken, it should be noted that sticking on the language known cannot be possible if tourist guides cannot understand so that learning another language would require the tourist guides to be learning a lot of vocabulary and that eventually would change their personality (Mulkeen, 2016). As to language spoken, tourist guides differ significantly in their problem-solving skills as shown in the chi-square value of 10.28 and probability value of 0.036. This means that the null hypothesis is rejected.

According to Swanepoel (2014), the words are a mixture of positive and negative, but they are always honest and helps the tourist in the best way they can. The manner a person conveys an information to solve a problem would differ depending on the spoken language and sound judgment.

In terms of the significant difference in the level of organizational tour skill of tourist guides when grouped according to language spoken, statistical analysis shows significant difference as to language spoken with chi-square value of 43.473 and probability value of 0.000. This means that the null hypothesis is rejected.

According to Thitthongkam (2010), language plays an imperative role in tourism organizational management. It facilitates communication among staff of headquarters and subsidiaries. It creates abilities to improve customers' satisfaction, to enhance and maintain skills of tourism staff, to motivate international tourists, and to increase better understanding on demand and culture. Subsequently, personnel with language skills are becoming more and more necessary for tourism organizational management. However, roles of language in tourism organizational management are not understandable clearly to tourism staff and related personnel at managerial level.

Communication is essential to the management (Harzing & Feely, 2008:). Language will be an important means to communicate within tourism organizations and for tourism organizational management. Language also activates the tourism organization to drive forward.

It is seen that interpersonal, decorum, problem-solving and organizational skills have P-values lower than 0.05 level of significance which means that the null hypothesis is rejected. This signifies that there is a significant difference in the interpersonal, decorum, problem-solving and organizational skills of the tourist guides when grouped according to province of language spoken.

### **Recommended Policy for Tour Guides**

The Department of Tourism (DOT), with support from Provincial Tourism Offices, Local Government Units (LGUs), and TESDA, aims to enhance tourist guiding standards in Region II. The program's goals include improving service quality, increasing tourist satisfaction, maximizing visit frequency, and ensuring tour guides' rights. Policies focus on qualifications, licensing, risk management, insurance, ethics, and identification for tour guides.

To qualify, guides must obtain a National Certificate in Tour Guiding Services and complete biannual training in foreign languages, first aid, cultural knowledge, and tourism laws. TESDA will support these certifications through free training programs. Licensing is also required, substituting formal education levels, and includes background checks and work permits. A standardized risk management plan will be developed with local experts to ensure guide preparedness for emergencies.

Insurance policies, sponsored by LGUs, are recommended to cover accidents, especially in high-risk activities like trekking and kayaking. DOT will also establish a Code of Ethics to enhance professionalism, with potential penalties for non-compliance. Identification through visible IDs and uniforms will improve security and guide recognition.

The study concludes that Region II's guides, despite limited formal education, show promising skill levels. However, further training is needed to address specific language, first-aid, and cultural knowledge gaps.



Implementing these policies will enhance tourism and boost the local economy by elevating service quality and guide professionalism.

Discuss the main results with reference to previous research

Policy and practice implications of the results

Strengths and limitations of the study

## CONCLUSIONS

Despite having limited formal education and relatively low educational attainment, the tourist guides in Penablanca and Piat demonstrate notable skills in tour guiding. This presents a promising outlook for the region, as these guides handle their roles efficiently and effectively, potentially attracting more tourists to the local attractions. While the guides exhibit competence in their work, they would benefit from additional training in Mandarin and English, first aid, and local culture and history. Notably, their problem-solving skills vary based on educational background and ethnicity, while interpersonal, decorum, communication, problem-solving, and organizational skills differ according to the languages they speak and their professional status.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings and conclusions, several recommendations are proposed. First, the Department of Tourism, in collaboration with TESDA, could initiate programs for tourist guides to undergo NCII assessment and offer short courses relevant to tour guiding. Second, the Department of Tourism (DOT) may adopt the recommended policy for ongoing professional development, which would enhance the skills of Region II's tour guides, contributing significantly to the growth of Cagayan Valley's tourism industry. Third, DOT could collaborate with the Philippine Association of Tourist Guides Lecturers Inc. to address the training needs of tour guides in Region II. Additionally, DOT could strengthen its partnerships with other tourism organizations to further improve the qualifications and competencies of guides in Piat and Penablanca. Curriculum planners are also encouraged to update tourism syllabi, especially in courses like Principles of Tour Guiding Policies and Trends, to reflect these proposed policies. Lastly, similar studies could be conducted, incorporating additional variables and broader scopes.

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