

Tour Guides' Perspectives on Their Work and Life: A Case Study of Jordanian Tour Guides

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite advances in the study of tour guiding, there has been limited exploration of the work and life of tour guides, and even fewer studies seeking the views and perspectives of tour guides themselves. This study employed interpretive qualitative phenomenology. Twenty-nine Jordanian tour guides were interviewed to seek their perspectives on their work, motivations for becoming a guide, and the impact of their work on their private lives. The data analysis and interpretation revealed themes focusing on the mechanics of a working day, insurance expenses, unpredictable income, job anxiety, perceptions of guides themselves and by others, and the impact of tour guiding on their private lives. The outcomes of this study provide new understandings of the work-life experiences of tour guides from their perspective, and implications for the tourism industry. The study may be used as a steppingstone for further empirical investigation that could be replicated in different countries and cultural contexts.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism accounts for 10.4% of global GDP and 319 million jobs or 10% of total employment in 2018 (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2019). Yet, relatively little remains known about tourism employment (Baum 2007; Baum, et al., 2016; Tribe & Lewis, 2003). Even fewer studies explore the social

aspects of tourism-related employment and the private lives of employees (Brymer, Perrewe, & Johns, 1991; Magnini, 2009; Ross, 1997).

Many studies of tourism employment suggest the industry is characterised by long working-hours, stress, seasonality, low status work, and variable remuneration (Baum et al., 2016; Kusluvan, 2003; Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2003; Ringer, 2013; Tribe & Lewis, 2003). Consequently, exploration of the work and private lives of those employed in the tourism industry is a valuable avenue of research. Perhaps more than any other occupational group in the tourism industry, we suggest that tour guides experience these aspects more acutely than most as a result of tour cancellations, extended tours, irregular work, delays, long working hours, and irregularity of employment (Alrawadieh, Cetin, Dincer & Dincer, 2019; Yetgin & Benligiray, 2019).

In this study a tour guide is defined as a person, usually a professional, who guides groups (and sometimes individuals) around venues or places of interest such as natural areas, historic buildings and sites, and landscapes of a city or a region; and interprets the cultural and natural heritage in an inspiring and entertaining manner, in the language of the visitor's choice (adapted from the European Federation of Tourist Guide Association (Weiler & Black, 2015). Across the world tour guides are employed in both the private and public sectors and under a wide range of legislation and regulations (Weiler & Black, 2015; World Federation of Tourist Guide Association, 2019).

Tour guides perform many functions (Weiler & Black, 2015) and the literature on tour guiding has generally focused on issues such as the diverse roles of guides particularly the roles of communicator and interpreter, visitor satisfaction and expectations, quality assurance mechanisms and training and education (Christie & Mason, 2003; Scherle & Nonnenmann, 2008; Weiler & Black, 2015; Weiler & Ham, 2002).

Few studies have considered the professionalisation of tour guiding (Ap & Wong, 2001; Sun-Ah Ponting, Wearing & Black, 2003) and the impacts of this employment on the guide's work and private lives, and more critically fewer have sought to explore these issues from the tour guide's perspective (Aloudat, 2017; Salazar, 2005; Weiler & Black, 2015). Thus this study fills an important research gap in the tour guiding literature. The study sought to explore the work-life space of Jordanian tour guides from their perspective and is part of a larger study of Jordanian tour guides that resulted on a model that theorised the worldview of tour guides (Aloudat, 2017). This study also contributes to the literature on the long tradition of Arab (Sobh, Belk & Wilson, 2013) and particularly Jordanian hospitality (Shryock, 2003). The chapter presents the relevant literature, followed by the methodology, findings, discussion and conclusion that highlights avenues for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tour Guides and Tour Guiding

Over two decades ago, Holloway (1981) and Jafari (1985) noted a paucity of literature on tour guiding. Yet, despite this observation, scholars still express concern at the limited understanding we have of tour guides and the tour guiding industry (Ap & Wong, 2001; Black & Ham, 2005; Huang, Hsu, & Chan, 2010; Scherle & Nonnenmann, 2008; Yu & Weiler, 2006; Weiler & Black, 2015). Literature has predominately focused on the diverse roles that tour guides play which range from being information givers (Cohen, 1985; Pearce, 1984; Pond, 1993), cultural and spiritual brokers (Dahles, 2002; Jennings & Weiler, 2006; Macdonald, 2006; Parsons, Houghe Mackenzie & Filep, 2019; Scherle & Nonnenmann,

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