

Impact of Tour Guides on Foreign Tourist Satisfaction Level in Guided Tours

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Annotation. As destinations around the world compete for a larger share of the international tourism market, travelers' desires, requirements, and expectations are continually evolving. To remain competitive, the destinations must provide high-quality services and continuously develop themselves. Illustratively, Tour guides, as key representatives of destinations, have a significant impact on tourists' satisfaction and their willingness to re-visit. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of tour guides on the satisfaction level of tourists participating in guided tours in Uzbekistan and the extent of their impact on tourists' intentions to return.

Over the last seven years, there has been a positive trend in tourist guiding in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Especially, in sphere of tour guiding. As the number of tourists visiting Uzbekistan increases, and the demand for professional guides has increased. In this context, this paper emphasizes the importance and significance of tour guides in the development of Uzbek tourism and tourist satisfaction. The study collected and analyzed data from 20 surveys were completed by international tourists who visited Uzbekistan. The findings demonstrate a significant association between tourist satisfaction, intentions to revisit, and the quality of the tour guiding service.

Based on the analysis of the researchs, recommendations were developed for the tourism industry. However, the study has two limitations. Firstly, the questionnaire was prepared only in English, limiting the participation of non-English speaking tourists. Secondly, the study only involved international tourists who traveled with tour guides.

Overall, this study highlights the importance of tour guides as representatives of destinations and the significant impact they have on tourist satisfaction and intentions to revisit. The recommendations provided can assist the tourism industry in enhancing the quality of tour guiding services and ultimately improve the overall tourist experience. Future studies could consider overcoming the limitations of this study by conducting surveys in multiple languages and including domestic tourists and those who travel independently. Such studies could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of tour guides on tourist satisfaction and the development of tourism in Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Tourist destinations, tour guide, tourist satisfaction, international tourist

Introduction. Tourism is one of the world's largest service sectors and plays a vital role in the global economy. According to Hui & Wan, with the liberalization of the airline industry, technical advancements, the emergence of e-commerce, and demographic shifts, tourism is expected to continue

producing GDP and jobs. (Hui &Wan, 2007). Countries around the world have opened up to and invested in tourism, transforming the industry into a vital driver of socioeconomic progress through export profits, job creation, and infrastructure development. Uzbekistan has also recognized the potential of tourism and has become one of the world's most popular tourist destinations, owing mostly to its historical, natural features, and cultural legacy. In 2022, 1 million international tourists visited Uzbekistan, and it was ranked as the ninth Best Place to Travel in 2023. (Travel Lemming,2022)

Undoubtedly, Uzbekistan is one of the countries which are rich in historical cities such as Bukhara, Kharezm, and Kashkadarya. To be clear, Samarkand is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Uzbekistan. Samarkand is a world center of great value in the past as well as in the present, city allures international tourists with its unique natural and numerous scenic and historical beauties. It attracted over 1 million tourists in 2022 (Ministry of Tourism). Samarkand, known as the “Tourist Gate of New Uzbekistan”, is the capital of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in 2023. The 25th-anniversary session of the UNWTO General Assembly will be held in Samarkand. Therefore, this study focuses on the historical center of Samarkand and aims to explore the function of tour guides in the level of satisfaction of tourists who take guided tours in Uzbekistan. This research also aims to examine the effect of tour guide level on tourists' desire to return to the same location.

Furthermore, Tour guides play a critical role in shaping tourists' perceptions of a destination and can impact their likelihood of returning in the future. Excellent tour guides must have a positive professional attitude and the skills of a psychologist to anticipate the needs of clients and interpret phenomena and relationships in the tourist destination. (Curtin, Green, et al, 2010). Precisely, tour guides are ambassadors for the country, as they are typically the first to meet and greet visitors and the last to say goodbye when they leave the country.

Another pertinent point is that tourism is a communication phenomenon, and the best promoter of a tourist location is the delighted traveler. Therefore, the study aims to investigate the impact of tour guides on tourist satisfaction levels and their intentions to revisit. As the tourism industry is highly competitive and customers' expectations continue to rise, businesses have recognized the importance of customer service quality for future return and referral business. (Shahin, 2012)

The purpose of the research highlights the significance of tour guides in shaping the overall tourist experience and their impact on tourists' satisfaction levels and intentions to revisit. The findings of this study can assist the tourism industry in Uzbekistan in enhancing the quality of tour guiding services and improving the overall tourist experience.

Literature Review. In terms of human activity, guiding can be dated back thousands of years. Since the beginning of recorded history, humans have traveled the globe, and those who show the way are referred to as "pathfinders," "bear leaders," "proxemos," and "cicerones"—all of which were the forerunners of modern tour guides (Powell, 1993). As can be seen that the profession has a particular derivation. Even though guides have been around for more than 2,600 years, they only started playing a significant role in the travel industry with the rise of mass tourism. Today, organized tourism would be very challenging without the assistance of tour guides, both tour managers and tour leaders (who accompany the group during the journey) and tour guides (who welcome the group at the destination) (Rabotic, 2008). It is true that tour guide is a face of the nation and considered as a front line server.

What is more there are numerous definitions of tour guides offered by various organizations and literatures. As a dictionary example The Oxford English Dictionary defines "guide" as "one who leads or

shows the way, especially to a traveler in a strange country; one who is hired to conduct a traveler or tourist (e.g., over a mountain, through a forest, or over a city or building) and point out objects of interest" (Oxford 1933:IV/490). Another definition is given by the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA) is that a tour guide is "a person who guides visitors in their preferred language and interprets the cultural and natural heritage of an area, and who normally possesses an area-specific qualification issued and/or recognized by the appropriate authority" (WFTGA, 2014). The referred idea is providing a notion that guides mainly go with the language spoken by visitors. Although there are various definitions of tour guide, an internationally accepted definition provided by the International Association of Tour Managers (IATM) and the European Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (EFTGA) is that a tour guide is a person who guides groups or individual visitors from abroad or from the home country around the monuments, sites, and museums of a city or region; to interpret in an inspiring and entertaining manner, the language used the city or region; to interpret in an inspiring and entertaining manner, the language of the visitors (EFTGA,2014). The International Association of Tour Managers (IATM) asserts that tour guides serve as "intermediaries" between visitors and the "unknown" environment, acting as "buffers" between visitors and the social environment, arranging transportation, interpreting, handling issues, protecting visitors from difficulties, and creating a safe environment for visitors (Zhang & Chow, 2004). Now it is being figured out that the duty of tour guide not guiding but also being responsible for other task given above.

The job of tour guides was the subject of early studies on tour guides. According to Cohen (1985), the terms 'pathfinder' and mentor were used to describe the origins of the modern tour guide. The two origin lines were drawn from the tour guide's leadership and mediating spheres. Cohen (1985) identified four important components of a tour guide's duty. These are the instrumental, social, interactional, and communicative components. First and foremost, the instrumental component of the tour guide's function is tied to his or her own responsibility for the trip's seamless completion as an ongoing social activity. Second, the social component is concerned with his or her own responsibilities for the touring party's cohesion and morale. Third, the interactional component relates to his or her role as a go-between for his or her own party and the local populace, places, institutions, and tourism amenities. The fourth component refers to the tour guide's function of communicating destination-related information to tourists (Cohen, 1985). Other studies described the tour guide's role as a "mediator," "middleman," or "culture broker." These duties imply that a tour guide serves as a cultural interface between visitors and the host community and is essential in explaining the host culture to visitors (Huang et al., 2010).

Tour guides, according to Tosun and Temizkan (2004), have significant roles and responsibilities in the tourism business. A tour guide's job entails not only transmitting knowledge but also presenting it in an interesting and genuine manner (Ap & Wong, 2001). Furthermore, tour guides play an extremely important and diagnostic role in tourists' satisfaction with tour organization and travel experience (Zengin & Yildirgan, 2004).

Many tourism researchers, including Cohen (1985), Ap and Wong (2001), Dahles (2002), Cohen, Maurice & Cohen (2002), and Yu, Weiler and Ham (2001), believe that the tour guide is

- A leader who can take responsibility.
- A source of information and expertise.
- A mentor (the job of the mentor is similar to that of a teacher, tutor, instructor, or advisor).

- A cultural broker and mediator; various studies have revealed that tour guides play a direct role in moderating cultural interchange between visitors and host communities.
- a person who helps gain a deeper understanding of the places they visit
- An educator to assist tourists in understanding a wide range of themes such as politics, economics, society, culture, religion, general knowledge, education, health, and so on.
- An ambassador who extends hospitality and displays the destination in a way that entices people to return. A host who provides a comfortable environment for tourists and a person who influences the quality of service and the tourist experience, the duration of stay, and the economic advantages to a local community.

Tour guides, according to Leclerc and Martin (2004), present facts and anecdotal accounts about the locations visited, places photographed, and people encountered.

Furthermore, they provide a text to the silent panorama passing outside the windows of tour buses, and they are frequently regarded as culture interpreters or culture brokers, acting as the go-between for tourists and local hosts, and their cultural and communication competence play an important role for those local hosts receiving 'hordes of culture-hungry tourists' (Leclerc & Martin, 2004). Table 1 illustrates how tour guides' roles were divided into three main divisions and sub-groups.

Table 1: The Roles of Tour Guides

Tour management (focus on the group)	Geographical (original guide) Organizer Manager	Social (animator) entertainer
Experience Management (focus on individual)	Interactional (tour leader) group leader cultural broker	Communicative (Professional guide) Educator Teacher
Resource Management (Focus on the environment)	Motivate motivator	Environmental interpreter (naturalist guide) Ecologist Environmentalist

Source: Khalifah, 2002.

Re-visiting Concepts and Tourist Satisfaction in the tourism industry

Due to the high level of competition among business enterprises in the industries, having close relationships with customers has become mandatory for those who want to stay in the market and attempt to increase their market share by contributing significantly to their own continuous improvement (Bulut, 2011). One of the most important goals of service providers is to satisfy and retain current and past clients. Customer satisfaction is a difficult issue in the study of consumer behavior since customers are diverse and

have varying demands and goals (Leguma, 2013). In this context, regardless of industry, business enterprises that have become aware of this need have been working hard to increase the level of satisfaction obtained from the offered goods and services and build a portfolio of more loyal customers through close communication with their customers (Bulut, 2011).

The international tourism market has transitioned from a buyer's to a seller's market. As a result of this shift, buyers are more likely to expect lower-cost vacations and have a higher need for high-quality product design. Because of the marketplace's rivalry and customers' rising expectations, service providers have recognized the importance of customer service for future return and referral business (Bowie & Chang, 2005). There are several sectors in the tourist industry, including lodging, food & beverage, and travel. Each attempt makes a measure to quantify customer happiness in accordance with their quality programs. Customer satisfaction evaluation has grown in importance as quality has grown in importance in an increasingly competitive environment (Oztürk, 2004). In this regard, high levels of customer satisfaction have the following effects: increasing the frequency of repeat visits, influencing word-of-mouth referrals, and minimizing customer complaints that are likely to tarnish the organization's reputation (Okello & Grasty, 2009).

Satisfaction is a rating of a product, service, or aspect of a product or service, or of the product or service as a whole. According to Oliver (1997), satisfaction is a desirable end state of consuming; it is a pleasurable experience. Furthermore, satisfaction is defined as a psychological concept involving a sense of well-being or pleasure that results from a customer receiving what he or she hopes or expects from a product or service (Pizam & Ellis, 1999). Tourist satisfaction is described in the tourism business as the result of a comparison between tourists' expectations and experiences (Truong & Foster, 2006). Pre-travel expectations and post-travel experiences are the primary drivers of satisfaction. If encounters exceed expectations and result in sentiments of fulfillment, tourists will be satisfied and depart that destination with a positive recollection (Cam, 2011). In the tourism industry, several factors influence the level of satisfaction of tourists who visit a specific destination. These determinants include the quality of transportation, accommodation, food and beverage services, entertainment facilities, local people, tradesmen's actions and attitudes, and price policies (Kozak, 2003). Furthermore, because of the nature of tourism products, customer satisfaction with tourism products and services requires special attention.

Bowen and Clarke (2002) provide a good examination of the nature of tourism products in this context, arguing that they have various features such as intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity, and perishability in nature (Leguma, 2013). Furthermore, according to Jones and Sasser (1995), the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty is not linear. In non-competitive markets, dissatisfied customers have no choice but to remain loyal. However, in the tourism industry, which is one of the most competitive, satisfied customers have more options, and customer retention rates can be low. Because the tourism industry is a mature competitive market, it is more difficult to significantly differentiate the tourism product, but service quality may be the key to differentiation (Bowie & Chang, 2005). One of the biggest service sectors in the world is tourism. Tourism can increase visitor arrivals, government revenue, and employment at the location, providing benefits if it is planned correctly.

It is essential to draw visitors and encourage others to travel there for a more prosperous tourism industry to thrive (Chen & Tsai, 2007). Tourism marketing studies have recently concentrated on competitiveness, attractiveness, tourist loyalty to a resting place, visitor satisfaction and perceived service quality, and destination image (Buhalis, 2000; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Although

little attention has been paid to repeat visitation, recent studies have

investigated the role of re-visitation in creating a more dynamic tourism sector and a more distinguished tourist experience (Oppermann, 1999; Kozak, 2001; Jang & Feng, 2007; Hui et al., 2007). Repeat purchase is often regarded as one of the most essential topics in modern marketing. Many studies have found that (a) attracting previous customers is less expensive than acquiring new ones; (b) a 5% increase in customer retention can increase profit by 25-85%; and (c) customer retention leads to positive word-of-mouth referral (Jang & Feng, 2007). According to Shoemaker and Lewis (1999), one of the most important themes is repeat purchasing because of the benefits it provides, such as positive word-of-mouth, obtaining higher cost-effectiveness through return visitors, and boosting economic earnings.

Re-visitors are acknowledged as a significant phenomenon in the tourist sector, both for individual attraction and for the economy as a whole. In fact, a lot of tourist destinations depend a lot on returning travelers (Darnell & Johnson, 2001). Gitelson and Crompton's (1984) study into the repeat vacation market and its marketing implications was one of the earliest investigations into the phenomena of repeat visits. 'Many attractions and destination sites, such as beaches or resorts, must rely substantially on repeat tourism,' they reported.

They also mentioned five reasons why people return to the same location: Risk reduction/content with a specific destination, risk reduction/finding the same type of people, emotional attachments to a location, deeper investigation of the destination, and showing the resting places to others (Opperman, 2020).

Despite the increased number of studies that have been conducted recently, a number of studies on the importance of repeat visitors to the same destination have been forwarded (Pereda, 2002). Because of the high competition in the tourism business, various strategies for increasing tourism market share have been created.

According to research, developing customer retention and collecting information about regular clients would be highly convenient for any given destination (Gitelson & Crompton, 1984).

Tourist satisfaction with tour guiding service

A guided tour is a particular tourism product that consists of several components that are organized and supplied together by a tour operator (Bowie & Chang, 2005). A guided tour includes pre-arrival services, accommodation, meals, transportation services, and the tour guide/tour leader (Xu & Chan, 2010). During the on-tour procedure, tourists are accompanied by a tour leader or a tour guide, as opposed to independent travel, which is undertaken by the traveler himself/herself (Wang, Hsieh, & Huan, 2000). According to Enoch (1996), a guided tour is a sensible and practical approach to scheduling a vacation because it allows you to visit many landmarks in a short period of time. Furthermore, it is regarded as a less expensive mode of transportation because the costs of transportation services are shared among tour participants, as opposed to independent travel (Leguma, 2013).

Customer satisfaction in the tourism business has become a challenging and intriguing research topic to investigate since customers have unique features such as heterogeneity, and their perceptions and expectations alter over time (Leguma, 2013). In this regard, the evaluation of tourist satisfaction with guided tours is viewed as a complex procedure due to the composition of guided tours. There are various tangible and intangible factors that comprise the guided tour, such as the physical service features of the tour operator and intangible services offered by employees such as tour leaders or tour guides (Huang et al., 2010). Customer loyalty is composed of both hard and soft intangible services. On the one hand, it is a

combination of the customers' anticipation and perception of the vacation, their expectations prior to the tour, their attitudes and behavior (past travel experience), and their perceptions of equity and unforeseeable events during service encounters (Bowie & Chang, 2005). Furthermore, tourists have the opportunity to interact with various sectors such as transportation, lodging, restaurants, and attractions. This tendency makes assessing visitor satisfaction with guided tours difficult because it is difficult to remember the performance of each component for the tourists and compare it to their expectations (Leguma, 2013). Additionally, Bowen and Clarke (2002) note that it is challenging to maintain the same levels of customer satisfaction in a setting with numerous service interactions.

Customers' expectations, past experience, and consumer behavior throughout the on-tour process, the perception of equity, and unanticipated occurrences are all important elements in determining customer expectations in the tourism sector. These factors (Figure 1) are divided into two categories: internal factors (consisting of customers' expectations, previous experience, and behavior during the tour, as well as the perception of equity) and external factors (consisting of unforeseeable events and a source of stress for tourists). These elements have an impact on customer satisfaction at three separate periods of the tour (pre-tour, on-tour, and post-tour) (Bowie & Chang, 2005). Customer expectations and previous experiences influence customer satisfaction at the first stage (pre-tour). Customers' expectations, past experience, visitor behavior, the sense of equity, unanticipated occurrences, and customers' stress are likely to affect customer satisfaction during the second stage (on-tour procedure). Customer satisfaction is largely determined by consumers' experiences in the final stage (post-tour) (Leguma, 2013). Furthermore, these factors, along with the characteristics of tourism products and services, are likely to result in customer satisfaction, partial satisfaction, or customer dissatisfaction with the tour experience (Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999). Tour guides hold an extraordinary place in the system. They are an important aspect of the supply-side components in terms of organization. They can work for all supply-side players and in all sectors of the tourism industry. Tour guides are often viewed as service providers for visitors, regardless of who they work for (Pond, 1993). Furthermore, tour guides may be the most reviled people in the travel industry. They are blamed for travel issues such as severe weather and traffic bottlenecks. They are expected to handle all of the tourist's problems, whether they are within or outside their control (Prakash, Chowdhary, & Sunayana, 2011). As a result, according to Ang (1990), tour guides serve as 'buffers' between the tourist and site visitors. Tour guides are important front-line players in the tourism sector. They have the power to change a tourist's visit from a tour into an experience by utilizing their knowledge and interpretation of a destination's attractions and culture, as well as their communication and service abilities (Ap & Wong, 2001). As a result, the success of service quality in the tourism business is heavily dependent on the performance of tour guides (Körolu, 2009).

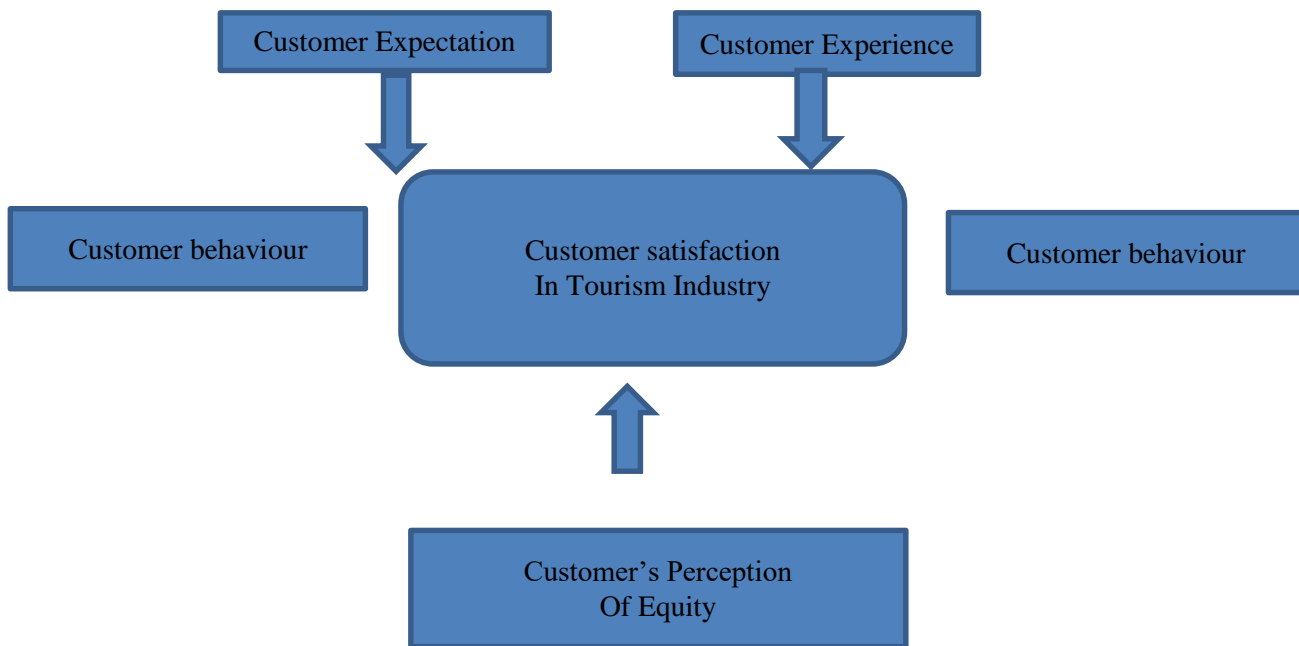


Figure 1: Factors Affecting Customer Satisfaction with Tourism Products and Services
Source: Yüksel & Yüksel, 2001; Bowie & Chang, 200

Methodology. So that data is collected, online questionnaire survey form is divided into three sections. The first section consisted of respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, and preliminary questions were posed to the participants of the survey including the questions such as which country they are from, what is their gender, The purpose of their visit, which cities they have traveled, they had traveled to Uzbekistan before, if they traveled how many times, have they used a tour guide service. In the second part they evaluated the tour guide's guiding skills asking by questions such as their level of language proficiency, what was their knowledge of the sights, had they sense of humor, how likely they recommend their holiday in Uzbekistan, how likely they are come to Uzbekistan again, ranging from "highly dissatisfied", to "highly satisfied"; from "very unlikely", to "very likely". In the third segment of the study, tourists were prompted to document their impressions of the tour experience, as well as the extent to which the tour guide's presence altered their perception of Uzbekistan. Additionally, participants were asked to specify the magnitude of change in their views of Uzbekistan, and to offer viable suggestions towards enhancing the quality of tour guides as communicated in their own words. The questionnaire form was designed in English language

Based on literature, research was undertaken in English on the concepts of tour guiding, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and re-visit intention in the tourism business. The survey approach was then chosen to gather primary data. The survey method was chosen for this study because it offered several advantages, including being applicable to people of all ages, allowing for practice in large groups and collecting adequate information for the research purpose, expressing the collected data numerically, providing quick access to the collected data, and being economical. The sample consisted of 20 collected surveys from overseas travelers primarily from the United States, Italy, Tunisia, Norway, Austria, the UK, and other European nations whose residents speak English fluently.

Data collection. This study was conducted in Samarkand, and its scope includes international tourists who took guided tours. The fundamental reason for choosing Samarkand as a research zone is the city's high quantity of international tourists. The number of international tourist arrivals to Samarkand over 1 million in 2022 (UzDaily news 2022).

There are some other points that are considered to have played a fundamental role in choosing Samarkand destination as a research area, having some of the most magnificent and majestic monuments in the world, its long history as a meeting place for various cultures, nations, and religions, and its status as the most significant tourist destination in terms of cultural tourism, given that tour guides have a significant influence on tourists' levels of satisfaction in general. The study was conducted in April 2023 with 20 international tourists.

Results and Discussion. The country profile of the respondents is in the figure, namely the majority of respondents who participated in the survey are from Norway (15%), followed by the UK (10%), Austria, Italy, Germany, and Russia have the same percentage as the UK (10%). (Figure 1)

The genders of the respondents are profiled in Figure 2. (Figure 2) The majority of the respondents are males (65%), followed by females (35%). Most of the respondents have a bachelor's degree (40%), followed by a master's degree same as bachelor's degree (40%), the lowest indicator is in Ph.D. degree (15%) Examining the findings the respondents' justifications for choosing Uzbekistan as their travel destination, 55% of the respondents considered as a leisure country Uzbekistan to have holiday. The respondents who chose business are (25%), and lastly, 15% of the respondents chose Uzbekistan for other reasons. Almost 90% of tourists who traveled to Uzbekistan visited Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bukhara. (Figure 5)

According to respondents' answers, 60% of their tour guides were male, and 40% were female. It was clear that 65% of tour guides' age figures are 20 and older, and 35% are 30 and above. The socio-diagram illustrates the level of language proficiency in figure 6. Among them advanced-level tour guides (65%), intermediate-level tour guides (20%), and last proficiency-level tour guides (15%). Regarding the level of knowledge of the guides about the sights, the number of excellent answers was 14 (70%), and the number of good answers was 6 (30%).

When tourists were asked how tour guides were able to change their opinion about Uzbekistan, Norwegian respondents answered that way- "I didn't know much about Uzbekistan before visiting the country. Now I really want to visit it again! The guide showed us how beautiful the country is! The Uzbekistan people we met were some of the most generous people I have ever met. I love the country Uzbekistan!"

And some of them gave positive answers, while others said that the guides did not have much effect on it.

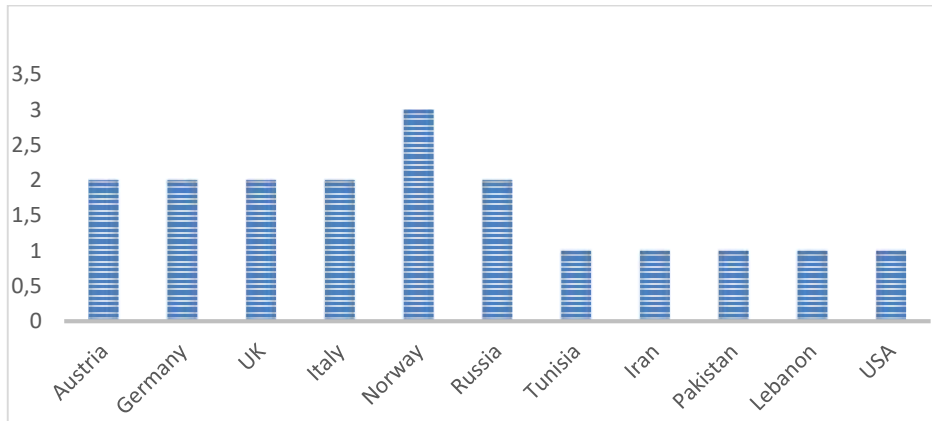


Figure 4.1. Country profile of Respondents. The majority of respondents who participated in the survey are from Norway (15%), followed by the UK (10 %), Austria, Italy, Germany, and Russia have the same percentage as the UK (10%).

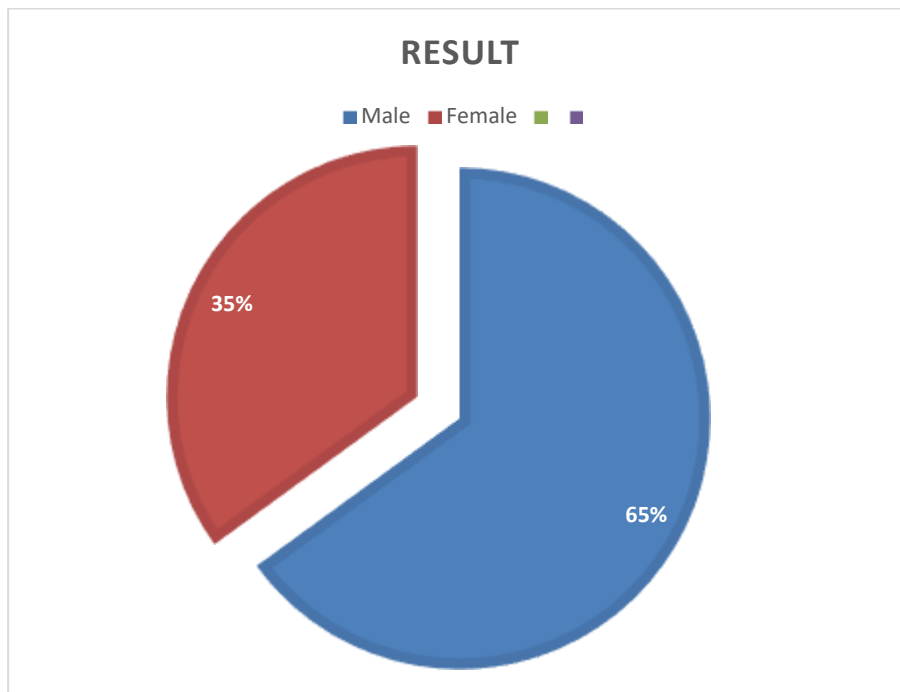


Figure 4.2. Gender of the respondents. It is clear from figure number 2 that the majority of the respondents are males (65 %), followed by females (35%).

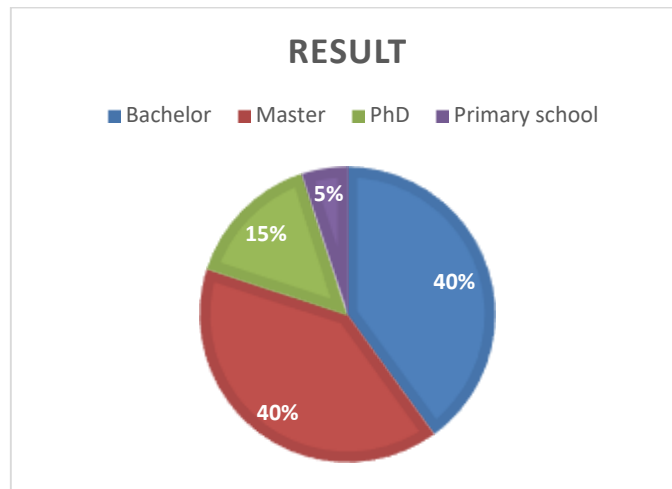


Figure 4.3 The next question in the survey as dedicated to the level of education of respondents. The graph below the result of the responses to the question. Most of the respondents have a bachelor's degree (40 %), followed by a master's degree same as bachelor's degree (40%), the lowest indicator is in Ph.D. degree (15%)

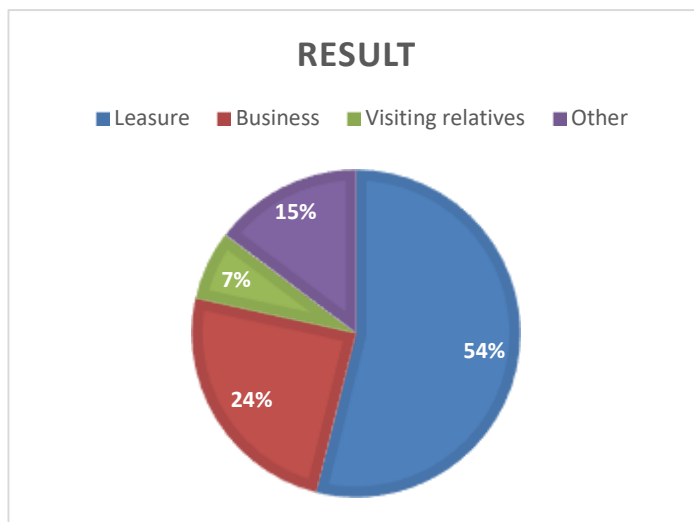


Figure 4.4: Respondents' purpose of the visit. The figure below shows the Respondents' purpose of the visit. The respondents' justifications for choosing Uzbekistan as their travel destination, 55 % of the respondents considered as a leasure, 25% of the respondents considered as a business, and 15 % of respondents chose Uzbekistan for other reason.

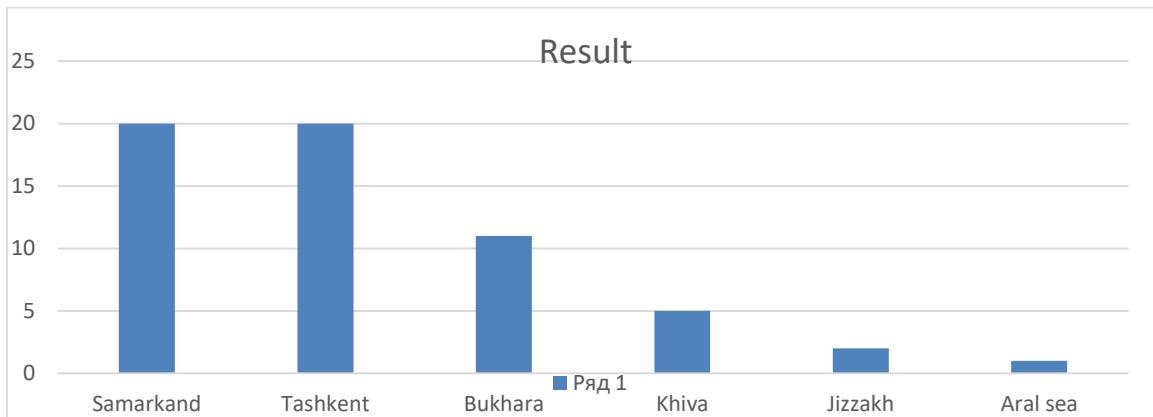


Figure 4.5: Most visited cities by Respondents. Furthermore, it was important to find out the list of most of the visited places in Uzbekistan. In this relation, figure 4.5 shows the most visited cities by Respondents. Based on the results, 90 % of tourists who traveled to Uzbekistan visited Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bukhara.

The question number 6 in the survey was aimed to find whether Respondents had a guided tour or not during the trip. 95% of interviewed visitors had guides during the tours. This information was very important as we analyse the influence of tour guides on tourist satisfaction.

The next question in the survey based on the tour guide's gender during the respondents' trip. According to respondents' answer, 60% of their tour guides were male and 40% were female. In the question number 8 it was clear that 65 % tour guides' age figures are 20 and older, 35 % are 30 and above.

Concerning the level of awareness of the guides about the sights, the amount of excellent answers was 14 (70%) and the number of good answers was 6 (30%)

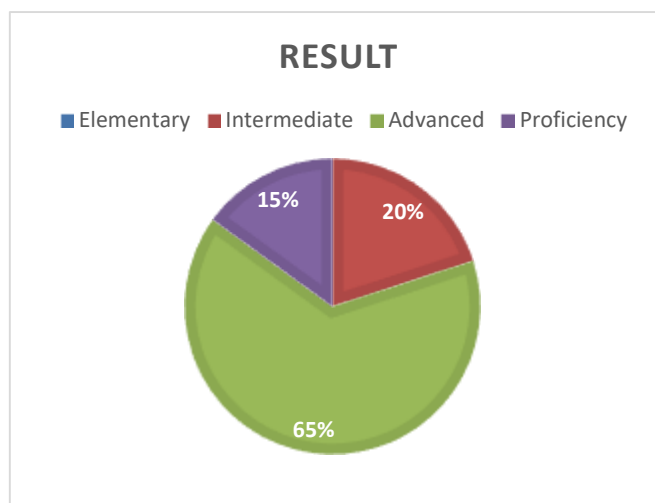


Figure 4.6: level of language proficiency of the Tour Guides. The figure shows the level of language proficiency of the Tour Guides. According to the answers of the survey advanced-level tour guides (65 %), intermediate-level tour guides (20 %), and last proficiency-level tour guides (15%).

Conclusion and Recommendation. Considering the situation of tourism and tour guides in Uzbekistan, tourism and related activities are significant in terms of generating income and economic growth. In this case, tourist satisfaction with guided tours takes its rightful place in tourism in this very limited context. Another notable point is that travel guides, despite their importance, are already attracting researchers' attention in the areas of satisfaction, loyalty, and revisit intentions. In this context, the tour guide, as one of the most important frontline players in the tourism industry, transforms a tourist's visit from tour to experience through his knowledge and interpretation of the destination's sights and cultures. Hence, the success of the service quality in the tourism industry very much relies on the performance of tour guides.

As a part of the research, the contentment level of surveyed tourists, 65% of them are highly satisfied and 35 % of them are satisfied.

Consequently, it can be affirmed that travel agencies operating in Uzbekistan have a crucial position in the tourism industry and they meet the following needs and expectations: Tourists visiting in Uzbekistan at a high level. (In conclusion must be mentioned that points which were above) The research's findings also make it obvious that it is important to analyse what respondent want. According to the study's findings, the majority of respondents planned to return to Uzbekistan. As a result of the respondents' recommendations which they give to relatives and friends, the applied analysis revealed that almost 100 % of respondents said they would suggest Uzbekistan to relatives and friends. The acquired result indicates that the respondents will promote Uzbekistan through word-of-mouth marketing in their home countries, implying that the number of foreign visitor arrivals in Uzbekistan. will increase in the next years. In terms of satisfaction with the tour guide service, the majority of respondents were highly satisfied. One of the features of tour guides, such as 'knowledge,' had a vital influence in achieving this level of pleasure. In this regard, it can be stated that tour guides operating in cities of Uzbekistan have sufficient knowledge and should improve their level of performance in terms of traits such as skill and personality. In the survey, when the respondents were asked for suggestions on improving the quality of tour guides, some of them said that it would be great if tour guides could speak other languages apart from English.

As a result of the fact that the majority of travelers want to go on a guided tour in Uzbekistan, it can be argued that the performance of the tour guide plays a principal role in generating customer satisfaction and loyalty. In other words, a tour guide's performance can impact visitors' expectations in relation to the performance of other tour guides. On the contrary, tour guides should provide a service that meets tourists' expectations by taking their requirements, desires, and cultural differences into account.

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Appendix

Tourist name?

Which country are you from?

What is your gender?

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

What is your level of Education?

Primary school

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

PhDs

What is your purpose for the visit?

Leisure

Business

Visiting relatives

Other

Which cities have you visited?

Did you have a guided tour?

Yes

No

Gender of your guide

Male

Female

What age of your tour guide?

>20

20-29

30<

Level of language proficiency?

Elementary

Intermediate

Advanced

Proficiency

What was his/her knowledge of the sights?

Bad

Good

Excellent

Does he/she have a good sense of humor?

Yes

No



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How did the guide change your view of Uzbekistan?

How has your view of Uzbekistan changed?

How likely are you to recommend your holiday in Uzbekistan to your relatives and friends?

Uncertain

Unlikely

Very unlikely

Likely

Very likely

What suggest would you give to improve the quality of tour guides?