

VIEWS OF ACADEMICIANS AND PROFESSIONAL TOURIST GUIDES ON DOMESTIC PRACTICE TOURS

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the qualification of domestic tour guidance training tour which is a part of the tour guidance education with the opinions of the academicians and professional tourist guides. In this qualitative study, semi-structured interview technique is applied for data collection. According to the results, domestic tour guidance training tours are quite important, necessary and sufficient. Further, the same should be divided into regions to increase the motivation of students and to avoid tiredness and concentration loss, etc. It was also found out that knowledge of professional tourist guides in domestic tour guidance training tours are sufficient.

Keywords: Tourist, Tour Guide, Tour Guidance Education, Training Tour, Practice Tour

INTRODUCTION

Tourists constitute the core of the tourism industry, one of the most important income generating industries of the world. Whether visiting another district in their own country or going abroad, a tourist leaves the surroundings they are used to living in and know well. They are in need of help in all matters from information to shopping, behaviour to attitudes and entertainment in unfamiliar surroundings. In fact, tourists have the opportunity to obtain the information they desire regarding the region or country they will visit from static guides such as books,

magazines, brochures, videos etc. However, a large portion of tourists prefer to obtain information from professional tour guides, or in other words individuals who have chosen tour guiding as a profession (Değirmencioğlu & Ahipaşaoğlu, 2001, p. 1).

A tour guide is an individual who runs a tour or whose primary task is to pass on the accurate and detailed information of a specific region (Bowie & Chang, 2005, p. 305). According to Ahipaşaoğlu (2006, p. 121), the Tour Guides are; “Individuals who guide local and foreign travellers within a particular program, who provide accurate information in a suitable language about the sites within the scope of the program, who promote the country or region, and help travellers get the right social, economic and cultural impressions”. According to the 6326 numbered Tour Guide Profession Act which entered into force on 22 June 2012, a tour guide is a real person who has the right and authority to offer tour guide services, having been accepted to the profession in accordance with the provisions of the law (Tour Guide Profession Act, 2012, article 2). According to another definition, “A tour guide is the showcase through which a tourist experiences a country and who represents the people of a country” (Güzel, 2014, p. 54). As can be understood from the definitions, a tour guide represents a country and the people of a country towards tourists visiting the country, and thus tourists are able to form an opinion on the country and its people. Tour guides also assume an indispensable role of mediator in the consumption of touristic services (Dahles, 2002) and a cultural intermediary giving information about the culture of a country (Ap & Wong, 2001). The guide does not only give information, but reflects the culture of the country to tourists through their behaviour and attitudes and allows tourists to experience this. In addition, the tour guide is also of great importance for the image of the country and destination, the success of the tourist industry, and whether tourists will continue their travels or not, depending on performance and a quality service provision (Zhang & Chow, 2004, p. 82). Therefore, a tour guide must, in addition to having a very good knowledge of his native language, religion, culture, history and geography of the country, be proficient in subjects such as archaeology, mythology, art history, religious history and iconography, have strong communications skills and sufficient foreign language skills. In this aspect, the education of the tour guide is an important issue which requires focus.

Tour guide training in Turkey varies. There are certificate programs offered by the Turkish Guides Association (TUREB) under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, associate degree and degree programs at universities, and post graduate programs in the social sciences institutes of certain universities opened recently. The courses in the programs differ, and there are differences in the curriculum of universities. Therefore, the training of tour guides, of great importance to the tourism industry and country, occurs at

different levels. The individual who wishes to be a tour guide is required to participate in domestic practice tours (training tours) organized by the Tour Guides Association (TUREB) under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, in order to reinforce the education received in theory and convert it to practice, following the completion of theoretic training in any form. Through this training, it is intended for the tour guide to be knowledgeable in all matters related to tourism and the profession. Therefore, as important as theoretical education is in the training of professional tour guides, practice and domestic practice tours, which are a part of tour guide training, are of just as much importance. It is aimed in this study to determine the adequacy of domestic practice tours from the perspective of academicians and professional tour guides. Another aim of the study is to determine whether there is a difference of opinions regarding practice tours between academicians and tour guides.

Purpose and Importance of Study

Professional tour guide education varies in Turkey, with students wishing to become tour guides required to participate in domestic practice tours organized by the Tour Guides Association (TUREB), with the knowledge of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, in order to reinforce their knowledge and see things on site following their theoretical education. Therefore in addition to education received in universities, the importance of domestic practice tours, also known as training tours, where professional tour guides learn how the guiding profession is carried out, and where theoretical education is turned to practice is undeniable. From this point, the subject of the study consists of the domestic practice tours within the scope of professional tour guide education, and it is aimed to determine the adequacy of practice tours. The study, conducted using qualitative methods, includes the views of academicians and professional tour guides. In this context, another aim of the study consists of determining whether there are differences between the opinions of academicians and professional tour guides regarding domestic practice tours.

As a result of literature review, it has been determined that there are studies regarding tour guide education (Değirmencioğlu, 2001; Ap& Wong, 2001; Black & King, 2002; Kuşluyan&Çeşmeci, 2002; Weiler& Ham, 2002; Christie & Mason, 2003; Avcıkurt et al., 2009; Arslantürk, 2010; Gül, 2012; Carmody, 2013), however not much work related to practice tours within the scope of tour guide education has been found. As such it is considered that it may be a guide for studies to be carried out on this matter. In addition, in line with the opinions to be obtained from professional tour guides in the industry as well as academicians working in

education, recommendations will be made regarding domestic practice tours and ideas will be offered for the training of professional tour guides, the future actors of tourism, and for practice tours to be productive.

RESEARCH METHOD

In the study carried out to determine and interpret the views on domestic practice tours, a part of tour guide training, a qualitative research method was used and data was obtained from different groups.

In this regard, the population of the study consisted of academicians from Tourism/Tour Guide departments at state universities in Turkey, and professional tour guides working in the tourism industry. The reason for this is department academicians being in direct contact with tourism/tour guide students and receiving feedback from students participating in the practice tours. As for professional tour guides, they were preferred due to having participated in practice tours prior to beginning their professional lives, and certain tour guides personally taking part in practice tours, as well as a belief that they will be able to clearly express their views on how they think practice tours should be carried out due to their work in the industry.

As it is not possible to reach the entire population of the study, a limited number of individuals were included in the study with the ability to represent the population as opposed to studying the population, and in terms of adding speed and practicality to the study, convenience sampling was used to allow in depth studying of those with rich knowledge. Having begun the interviews, individuals interviewed recommended others thought to have more information on the matter, and the interviews continued using snowball sampling. At this point, academicians who have personally led students during practice tours were included in the study. The reason for this, is interviewed academicians believing that I would be able to obtain better information from academicians who have participated in practice tours and recommending I meet with them, and the academicians in question having personally participated in practice tours and seen what students experience and how practice tours are carried out. Thus the opportunity to access better information resources has been provided to the study.

Once the locations or people were selected in the study, the most suitable data collection method was selected (Creswell, 2013, p. 146-147). In this context, one of the most widely used of the qualitative research methods, the semi structured interview technique, aiming to enter into the inner world of the participant and understand their point of view (Patton, 1987) was selected as a data collection method for the study. In the semi structured interview

technique, an interview form with interview questions is prepared in advance (Ekiz, 2015, p. 63) and thus there is an interview guide that provides a checklist of titles, default phrases and order of questions. However, during the interview, the expressions and questions are generally shaped according to the flow of the interview, and in addition questions unplanned to have the participant continue what they are saying may be asked (Robson, 2015, p. 347).

The interview was conducted using a semi-structured interview form. When preparing the interview form, studies on tour guide education in literature was reviewed, important factors regarding practice tours considered and interview questions created. The prepared interview questions were examined by two different experts and the final form of the interview form was achieved in line with their recommendations. The following questions were included in the interview form in line with the aim of the study:

1. What are their perceptions towards domestic practice tours?
2. What are their thoughts on the positive and negative aspect of domestic practice tours?
3. What are their thoughts regarding the duration of domestic practice tours?
4. What are their thoughts regarding the knowledge of tour guides on domestic practice tours?

The participation of interviewees was based on voluntary participation and the interviews were carried out between March-May 2016. Interviews held with the consent of the participants were recorded using voice recorders. 11 academicians and 9 tour guides were included in the study sample from among volunteers to the study. As the number of interviewed sources increased, the data and information obtained started to become repeated. This shows that as a result of the interviews, the obtained data reached saturation. In this case, as interviews no longer provided new data for the study, the number of participants was deemed sufficient and the interview portion of the study was ended. The interview length varied between 26 minutes and 40 minutes.

In order to ensure the accurate and unbiased analysis of data obtained with a qualitative research process and to reach valid conclusions, the use of various qualitative data analysis techniques is required (Seggie & Bayyurt, 2015, p. 360). For this reason, the responses received during interviews conducted within the scope of the research were analysed using the Nvivo 11 for Windows qualitative data analysis program.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Findings Related To Academicians

In order to prepare the participants for the interview, the “What are your perceptions regarding practice tours, what do you think of when you hear practice tour?” question was posed, and the subjects that the participants emphasized regarding their perception of practice tours were found to be the requirement of practice tours, mandatory participation, practice and education. Excerpts from emphasized matters have been given below.

“The practice tour is a tour where students put all that they have learned in theory during their education into practice. It is a tour where they are able to use all the information they have learned in their curriculum, from Art History, Mythology, Archaeology, Anatolian Civilizations etc...” (A1)

“...an opportunity, a preliminary opportunity for a student to apply their profession in practice, a tour to the places where they will work in the future, relaxed, with their teachers and other friends...” (A3)

Participant A3 also emphasized the fact that there was also a pleasure aspect to the tour with the words *“...It is a tour, so it is fun, teaching, a good memory the students will make together which they will remember for the rest of their lives...” (A3)*

“... you zip or you compress programs on the computer. Compressed training tours, but as they are so very intense, they are tours where you only get to know and see the places you rush through...” (A5)

“...Of course I think it is necessary for students to go on a tour of Turkey as a general Turkey tour application in tour guide education. Because no matter how much theoretical knowledge they have, it is impossible for them to describe a place they have never seen or known, it is not possible for them to transfer that feeling to the visitors, despite being knowledgeable about the area...” (A7)

“...according to our law, it is something that all tour guide candidates or individuals wishing to be guides are required to do...” (A10)

“...a process that is part of the education we offer in order to make the theoretical knowledge the students of the guide department gain valid in practice...” (A11)

Another participant has considered the practice tours from another perspective and touched upon the tour organization.

“...arranging places for children, provision of busses, provision of guides, all details, the preparation of a list of where will be visited, what archaeological sites will be visited, on what date...” (A9)

Similarly, participant A6 put the educational side of the practice tour to one side and talked about the importance of the program for tour guide students.

“...I think it is very important for tour guide students, it is something that must happen and must be taken seriously... the program is important, in terms of organization. The application, duration, a business, agency that can carry out the program, programming in advance in the education side, arranging, preparation... The preparation of certain things in detail...” (A6)

With the question aimed at learning the positive-negative aspect of practice tours held within the scope of professional tour guide education, it was stated that there were no negative aspects, however there were certain negative aspects to how it is carried out, and that there are many positive aspects of practice tours. The statements reflecting the positive aspects of practice tours are as follows:

“...We can say that the practice tours are quite positive for students because they have the chance to put their theoretical knowledge into practice... The western tour being carried out in the winter period and coinciding with term break is important in terms of the students and costs...” (A1)

“...one of the important conditions of admission into the profession... everything that is taught on that practice tour as a guide, that actual archaeological site, the route of that actual antique city, to where the guide will stop to give their presentation is on this practice tour...” (A11)

“...Just as a preliminary assessment is made of a profession, you get to learn the job that will be your bread winner in the future... it reduces the stress that will be experienced when starting to apply the profession...” (A3)

“...they get to see on site, it is very different to see it personally with your naked eyes... As someone who will become a guide, you learn everything from how to reach the location, where there is a car park, where there is a toilet...” (A4)

“... responsibility for students. They are not aware just yet, the practice tour if nothing else gives the kids an idea about the guide profession...” (A6)

“...having visited the area before will allow them not to be unfamiliar when they go again with guests...” (A7)

Professional tour guide domestic practice tours are carried out by TUREB in accordance with paragraph (d) of article 3 of the 6326 numbered Tour Guide Profession Act accepted on 22 June 2012. Previously, tours were carried out by the universities. A participant who has personally participated in a practice tour gave the following statement on the positive aspects of practice tours from the perspective of an academician.

“...One of the greatest contributions of the Turkey tours is that you do not get to know them well enough in school, you have a better chance during the tour... You can see a character in the students that you haven't noticed before, different aspects to their characters, and you can get a better relationship. Students get to know their teachers better too... The educator-student communication continues at a higher level at a professional level... so in addition to developing their professional or occupational skills, the tour also brings communication between educator and student to a higher level.” (A3)

The expressions about the negative aspects of the practice tours are as follows:

“I personally don't think there are negative aspects. It is necessary...” (A4)

“I don't think there is any negative aspect of the practice tours.” (A5)

Participants have stated that there are no negative aspects to practice tours. Some participants have mentioned certain negative conditions that have been experienced. Their statements on negative experiences during practice tours are as follows:

“...we can consider the long duration of tours as a negative...” (A1)

Similarly, participant A2 has also considered the long duration as a negative aspect.

“I can't think of anything negative to be honest. What I would say could be better; I focus a lot on this. You can't have a 25-30 day practice tour. In fact, a practice tour that is longer than 15 days isn't healthy. It doesn't teach anything, it doesn't add anything when it is a long time.” (A2)

Another participant has expressed the importance of authority on the practice tour and has considered this among the negatives.

“...a negative aspect is, if the teachers relax the rules too much, students can see it less as a training tour and more as a leisure trip. Negative aspects are a little related to

authority, one has to be very careful with authority during the tour, and it isn't good to be too strict either... There isn't really a negative aspect of these tours, but if certain conditions aren't meant during their application then there can be problems experienced. The agency is important, the discipline of the people offering the tour is very important..."
(A3)

Participant A3 also reported that there were some problems with the guide as follows.

"... On the tour, for example, the choice of guide, for example you have preference of a guide that is one of the negatives I have encountered. The choice of guide is very important in that respect. When an agency is organizing a tour they must pay attention to homogeneity in the guides, their knowledge, their age, even gender being similar, because the students can choose one guide and raise them, praising them constantly while being negative about other guides, saying they don't know anything for example. This is what we experience..." (A3)

Some participants however, mentioned some negative aspects related with the practice tours being organized by TUREB.

"Now the practice tours are organized by TUREB. And thus there are problems I believe experienced in the limited number of days with practice tours, and it being regional. Our students have problems with the guides from time to time..." (A8)

"...I think being in the hands of TUREB is one of the great negatives, also the prices are quite high... in previous practice tours, I had a chance to talk to some of the students, and I think working with guides that do not have much knowledge, or appointing of guides that aren't really teachers are some of the negative aspects..." (A10)

One participant mentioned the negative aspect of the practice tours by considering the operational aspect of the work. He also mentioned the tour guide aspect in a negative manner.

"... 36 days is a very long time, 40 days is a long time. Let's make it shorter. Or let's add these archaeological sites, include these destinations too, let it go a little longer, that is another matter for discussion, but I don't think there are negative aspects to practice tours, there's nothing in my mind. The practice must be done..." (A11)

"... teaching is one thing, professional guidance is another. Therefore you need to be able to give all your experience and knowledge to the students in the best way during every step of this tour so that they at the very least establish an infrastructure towards any problems..." (A11)

One of the important conditions of becoming a professional tour guide is the tour guide domestic practice tour. Students completing their education are required to participate in domestic practice tours of at least thirty six calendar days carried out under the supervision and control of the Ministry in order to consolidate their knowledge from theoretical knowledge, get to know specific historical and touristic areas and become knowledgeable on them (PTR Regulation, 2014). Another of the aims of the study was related to the duration of the tours, querying whether a 36 day domestic practice tour would be more suitable for students in parts.

Participants stated that it would be better for the domestic practice tours to be held in parts or regions. Of the academicians participants, one emphasized that having it in one tour would be better for the students considering a different point of view. The expressions about the duration of the practice tours are as follows:

“...It is a long period for students to be able to focus, to understand what is explained, to assimilate what they have been told... I think it would be far more efficient if it was held in segments of one week or at most 10 day duration tours.” (A1)

“...I do not think that this duration is very effective in seeing so many places, in getting to know them. Being split into sections, in regions, splitting into 2, or if possible even splitting into 3 could offer more advantages. And the students will be able to concentrate. Because from my observations, attention, interest etc. is distracted... it is important in terms of keeping coordination alive...” (A10)

“...It could be carried out with daily trips to places close to the school... You can't measure performance with a 20 day tour, people end up in tourist mode at the end of 4 days... When these kids enter the profession they won't be faced with a 40 day tour or a 20 day tour. I think their perception will be higher with shorter tours, I think it will be more instructive...” (A2)

“Prior to 6326 we carried them out ourselves. We would do that through a travel agency by getting route permission from the Ministry, and we held it as a single tour, and then as we gained experience we saw that doing it in 2 parts was more suitable.” (A11)

“Doing it in parts always makes more sense. Because that interest you have at the beginning of a tour is unfortunately lost towards the end.” (A7)

Similarly, one participant mentioned the intensity of the tour and stated that splitting it into parts or giving students a 1 day break in very busy regions would be better, that they

implemented this during the period they organized the practice tours themselves and saw the benefits.

"There may be benefit to splitting it into stages. Particularly, for example, it may be useful to leave a space of 1 day in some tiring stages. Istanbul takes 4 days, and it is very tiring. For example, after 4 days in Istanbul, there should be a period of 1 day for students to take a rest. Because otherwise the student can't keep up. Either they are much too tired, and cannot concentrate. One should pay attention to these kinds of things, a 1 day break may be needed after very busy stages. It also increases motivation. We have implemented this..." (A3)

"... Yes, it is quite tiring. Because you sleep one night, you're on the road the next day, you sleep one night, the next day you're back on the road. That tires a person and can cause weariness. Either you see that the excitement of the beginning of the tour is decreasing towards the end. This naturally reduces the efficiency of the tour..." (A4)

"...Because it is held in 40 days, it is like the people on the tour, the students, forget it. After 40 days they can't remember the place they went on day one. They remember where they have been, but cannot keep the information alive and it is not possible to take notes either..." (A5)

Participant A6 mentioned the practice tour being held in parts, and also stated that some of the places visited in the tour program need to be cancelled.

"I think that all must be done, but 50 days is too much, 36 days in a single go is also much too long in my opinion. It may be good to have 2 stages, 3 stages, but then that could be costly for the student. That may be an additional burden. I do think some areas could be removed from the program... Some archaeological sites, they can be given in terms of information, and I don't mean for all of them, not for a large majority, but the program could be shortened perhaps." (A6)

Another participant noted that the duration of the practice tour is short with the following words.

"It is short. I think it is far too short... These are short periods, even the students are saying this. We went too fast, we didn't get to see enough places. The work wasn't described to us in detail. Therefore students return with feedback that the visits to archaeological sites are short... I think it could be more or even 3 stages." (A8)

Another participant stated that there could be difficulties with it being held in regions, and emphasized the important of the national card.

"The longer the duration, the more extensive the trip and the speed will also drop a little more. It is better to have a lower tempo, because when there is a very busy tempo they get more tired... I don't think it is good to separate it into regions. It is easier to do all of Turkey in one go because it is over in one trip. Otherwise they will do 1-2 areas, will there be time to see the other regions or not, this can always cause problems. It would be difficult also to get a regional card, because you have a card for the Marmara region. What do you do when there is a tour that includes Marmara, and Central Anatolia and the Black Sea, you can't take it... I think it should be a national card, not a regional card, and there is a need for a practice tour that encompasses all of Turkey." (A9)

The professional tour guide who participates in the practice tour within the scope of tour guide education is important in terms of the information provided and showing what needs to be done and how. In addition, students participating in the practice tour see the professional tour guide as a role model. Therefore the qualification of the tour guide is important. Participants have had various opinions regarding the qualifications of the tour guides. The following are expressions stating that the tour guides are adequate.

"We can say it's positive. Because those who have been guiding for a certain number of years are required to supervise the tour. In this regard, these guides are people who know how much information to give, who carry out their profession in the best possible way. In that sense we know they have selected people who are able to provide all kinds of information to the students such as Art History, Archaeology, Mythology, and General Culture. In this sense, I think the guides carrying out the tours are quite sufficient." (A1)

"... we met with guides who were very good, who know the seriousness of the work, and we have met those who are the opposite. In the sense of knowledge yes, most are adequate. But ultimately this is a training tour, a practice tour. It has a set of rules and conditions. With the tour guides being young like a tour group, there is some impact of that, as they approach them like that it can sometimes move away from being a training tour. But there are those that have a very professional approach and I can say it is sufficient." (A6)

"It is good, there are very good guides ... There are well equipped guides. However, these equipped guides are already full during the season. They only want to participate in the Turkey tour if it is out of their own seasons and that contributes to the tours and

the students. But if one is very good, you usually go with two guides, 2 busses 2 guides, and if one is very good then the other isn't... It may be good for students to see a very good example and an example of a guide who is not so good, but if you constantly give one guide to one group and the other group works with the good guide, that is when you experience problems..." (A8)

Some participants have also encountered tour guides who really do their job well and professionally, and tour guides who do not have the necessary knowledge or who wish not to share their knowledge. So they also saw the difference between the guides. Participants' statements are as follows:

"Some are very good, very enthusiastic, very well prepared. They prepare each day and come. Some of them are guides that do not prepare at all, as if the practice tour is done for the sake of it, who don't explain anything. There were guides that we changed for that reason... (A9)

"Unfortunately this is a big problem. Unfortunately, the guides are doing it rightly to make money out of this business, and the period when this tour is held is usually the time when the guides are making a start on the season with the hopes of earning good money. And guides obviously obtain a majority of their earnings through tips and commissions. And this leads to good guides not wanting to work on student tours. As there are no tips or commissions from student tours in general, only those who really wish to teach are found if you are lucky, otherwise it is tour guides who are not preferred who go on the tours." (A7)

"...there are some guides that I know that do not pass on all information to the students. There are guides that think I made great efforts to learn this information, I shouldn't just give it away, they should make an effort to learn this in the future, and I see it among those going on the tours. These kinds of people have a negative impact... There are guides who are graduates of education faculties; if the selection was made from those kinds of people I would guess it would be much more successful..." (A10)

"This is controversial. What I meant about negativity was this. The most complaints we get from students are regarding this, not that they are not happy with the accommodation or the comfort of the vehicle or what they eat and drink or that they are uncomfortable with what they are doing, we hear of more problems with the guides... I think there is still a process that needs reviewing in terms of guides as an association. Because teaching is one thing, professional guiding is another. Therefore you need to be able to give all

your experience and knowledge to the students in the best way during every step of this tour so that they at the very least establish an infrastructure towards any problems. When a reluctant guide comes to the bus without opening his mouth, and just gives information for 3-5 minutes before getting to the archaeological site, and then a guide enters the bus and gives information for the entire route, until reaching the archaeological site, like where they will get off, where they will stop, where the bus will park, where the guests will gather, where a lunch break will be given, giving all details, then obviously there will naturally be a difference between the guides. In this regard, we have also experienced negativities with regard to guides.” (A11)

“... The guides are very important, the guides are role models for the student, if the guides are slack, or not knowledgeable about the archaeological sites, then the students may not be satisfied with the tour. Because these students have the academic background of this profession, they have a certain knowledge ...” (A3)

“... in some regions we used regional guides. We removed one guide like I said... They sent us another guide in their place. It was quite good with that guide... We also had guides who had communication problems with the students... The guide is important.” (A4)

Some participants have emphasized that considering the areas included in the practice tours tour program, regional guides who have worked the area for a long period of time could accompany the students.

“... if you are going to do long tours, it is not right to expect the same performance from a guide. In other words, it is unfair to expect the same guide to be professional in Lycia, Karya and İstanbul. Because there are such guides, there are very good guides in this region, for example they have never left this region... So let a guide from East Anatolia guide for East Anatolia. Now there is a guide chambers in every region. Choose a competent person from that chamber... but you can't expect one person to know everything, there is a problem there.” (A2)

“... I do not think that the tour guides who came to the practice tours were chosen as educators. In other words, an educator is different, everyone can be a guide, but it is something different to be a guide educator... These guides who go on the training tours need to be carefully selected. On the tour I attended, went with 4 different guides for 40 days... And I only see one of them as sufficient in terms of knowledge. And they stand out anyway, when I'm with different people all the time. There are some problems with

this, the knowledge level of guides... They all have specific areas that they are experts in. For example, the guide who visits the Aegean region constantly knows Ephesus, Bergama, Pamukkale. But when you go now you cannot expect them to be very productive in the Akdamar church. Those kinds of problems can arise.” (A5)

Findings Related To Professional Tour Guides

Participants were asked the same questions as the academicians. In order to prepare the participants for the interview, the “What are your perceptions regarding practice tours, what do you think of when you hear practice tour?” question was posed, and the subjects that the participants emphasized regarding their perception of practice tours were found to be the requirement of practice tours, their importance, practice, the technical aspect of guiding and education. Excerpts from matters emphasized by professional tour guides have been given below.

“Practice tours are very necessary and are one of the most important cornerstones for those who will be guides in the future...” (G1)

“The practice tour is a very important application, where the guide candidate learns more regarding the technical than knowledge, from colleagues, and that makes up the most important aspect of application following the theoretical part, how to get to the archaeological site from the parking area, how to visit it...” (G2)

Participant G4 has conveyed the importance and requirement for the practice tour as follows.

“We can see the practice tour as putting what we have learned in theory, on a course or at university, into practice, seeing in person. It is a necessary practice so that the guides who will enter the profession in the future do not have any difficulties.” (G4)

Similarly, a participant stated that the practice tour was important in the training of tour guides and was a requirement.

“I think it is necessary for guides. I think it is one of the most important points in the course of guide training. I think that it is very necessary to go and see it personally, the route of the roads; the geographical, historical and local information, what to expect, the accommodation and transportation options are very important” (G7)

Participant G8 stated that the information given during the practice tour is very important for guide candidates and that they would use this information in the professional lives.

"I think those who participate in the practice tours become fully aware of the places they visit a see, and get the information with that awareness. And I think they will transfer it to the groups they will lead. I think that I am faced with a complete tourist group on the practice tour, because I think that the people on the tour will be passing on the information about the places to the people in their own tours. So I think that the information that will be given to them is also very important. I think that this information should be related not only to the places visited, but also to all the geographical, cultural and traditional information of the country, and I think that participants who fully perceive this, pay attention to this issue and enjoy it, will pass it on to others like this "(G8)

One participant emphasized the given information, and the importance of the stage of passing from theory to practice with the following words.

"It is an activity that allows guide candidates to learn how to carry out the profession, how to behave in practice. Therefore I think candidates should feel like they are a guide going on their first tour, and they need to act as if it is a real tour... That is when a practice tour is a training tour based on knowledge. I have thought I wish there was more on the practical side..." (G9)

Another participant also touched on price, lunch and accommodation and stated:

"The most important factor in the practice tours is the price, so you select the one which includes the required archaeological sites from the list of the ministry regarding archaeological sites, you select the cheapest offer that sticks to that list. So when considering only on price then there is a problem with the accommodation quality... And then so that there is no added food cost that is not calculated either. Lunches are left as extras. The accommodation is half board ..." (G2)

Similarly; Participant G3 also mentioned accommodation.

"...different hotels, from boarding houses to 5 star should be seen so that guide students can understand what star rating a hotel would have..." (G3)

Another participant noted the entertainment side of the work and stated that the practice tour is an orientation.

"The places that I have never visited in Turkey, the provinces, the history, the social structure, the economic structure of the regions visited... were really fun at first ... It is

very difficult to visit Turkey in 1 month. The road trip itself is already long, you don't have much time left to visit in the cities, towns you visit. So you don't get to know the place properly, it's kind of an orientation..." (G5)

The Professional Tour Guides have stated that there are a lot of positive aspects of the practice tours which are a part of tour guide education. Most of the participants emphasized the importance of the tour guide leading the practice tour among the positive aspect.

"... There is a great benefit in having a good guide leading. Because not only the knowledge, but colleagues for example took the group of students to the opera here ... Because they see them as a role model, they take the technical details they see as an example and they stay connected. Our market is not one where we can lose touch. We see each other, we come across each other." (G2)

"This is a very positive event. Because spending all the knowledge they have learned until that day is possible, before going on a tour they get to see. It is very important to see, read as much as you want, once you see it you learn.... I would say training tours are very important and must be taken seriously." (G3)

The positive side is preparation for the profession, taking the experience of the guides leading or the teachers, gaining from their timing and experience." (G4)

"It is very positive... The person who will guide you, the place you will visit may be important too, the vehicle may be important too, but the person who will be showing you around must be very competent. They prepare you in all ways, not just with knowledge, with the experience, as a guide you're like a soldier going off to war. You will be going to war and it is up to the person educating you to make sure you are completely ready and competent. I think practice tours are positive, I can't think of anything negative about them." (G6)

Some participants also focused on information gained on practice tours, and the fun they had while getting to see the history and natural beauty of Turkey.

"... In fact there are a lot of positive aspects. For one, being able to see everywhere before starting your profession, to get general information, and mostly to see historical sites, archaeological sites in detail is very good." (G5)

"Positive aspects; We can easily transfer knowledge to them because we often see that when we look at their average age they learn very easily, and at the same time we see that they enjoy themselves, that they enjoy learning" (G8)

The professional tourist guides who participated in the study stated that they did not see any negative aspect to practice tours in general. Some guides have pointed out a few negatives from different points of view to the practice tours. The expressions of the guides regarding the negative thoughts in terms of the students participating in the practice tours are as follows.

"... It may be a problem for students who do not have financial means, because the trip takes about two to three weeks, and obviously that adds up." (G4)

"... frankly, I have seen that students can see themselves as customers, being somewhat spoilt like expecting a service as a paying customer. I was saddened by that, the people who are doing this must be those intending on being tour guides professionally, secondly they must love Turkey very much, and they must not see the tour as a chore. Because they will not be able to take part in a tour of this scope later in their lives, they should know that, there won't be tours of this scope. Therefore the Turkey tour (the practice tour) is the biggest event at the beginning of the guide profession. We need to know the value of training tours, this cannot be measured monetarily." (G2)

The same participant said *"...this being given by tender, what would be right would be for TUREB to establish their own travel agency and not to give them to any other agencies. They do it with their own agency; they make their own loss or profit. That would leave no cause for doubt, when this work is given by tender it brings with it doubt all the time."* (G2), emphasizing that it is not good for these practice tours to be carried out by outside agencies.

Another participant expressed his thoughts on the negative aspects of the practice tour.

"I hadn't thought of the negative aspect before. Because of course, the difficulty of such an operation is huge. As I said before, you are destroying the energy, you are experiencing loss of concentration with tremendous exhaustion, but the purpose here is to give information. All of this is pulling down your ability to learn. But on the other hand, if you can prepare a pleasant, controlled, high-standard organization, with rest in between, an organization that is fun and gives people energy, then these handicaps are removed." (G9)

One participant considered the matter from a different angle and expressed his feelings as follows.

"Negative aspects; I think it might be related to grammar, it might be related to tradition. Because if they come for the first time, I think they need to practice with the nuance of

the people of the region, with their way of life, and I think after that everything will be easier...” (G8)

The duration of the practice tour has been considered in this study. Participants expressed that the duration of the practice tour was sufficient. At the same time, most of the participants stated that the practice tours should be done in segments or regionally. Participant G1 says that the duration of the application tour is long and must be done in parts.

“Practice tours are 35 days or over 20 days. I think these times are very long. I think it's hard for a student to keep interest and attention for 20 days. I think it is better to divide into 3 or 4 in 1 week, 10 days or more periods... It should be done in parts. For example, if 36 days are required, it could be in 4 parts of 9 days...” (G1)

Similarly; Participants G3, G4, G5 and G6 also think that the practice tours needs to be done in parts.

“...If it is split into regions then it will stick in their minds better, when it is all in one they just can't absorb it.” (G3)

"It is not an advantage to be at one time, it is a disadvantage. Because when people see the same things for 1 week and 10 days they lose interest whether they want to or not, their ability to perceive is weakened... “(G4)

“It's better to be regional. Because the time is longer. The longer the time, the easier it is to see everything, the more easily it is getting information, and the human mind has more energy.” (G5)

“...it might be better for it to be in parts, to be region by region for example...” (G6)

Participant G8 is also in support of the tour being held in parts and has explained it from another perspective. He also stated that he gives recommendations to students for the rest of the day with the following words.

"Turkey may seem small on the map, the distances, the kilometres to see 2-3 places, but sometimes problems, or calculations, “let's not call it a problem” sometimes cannot be made. Therefore we see after a while the practice student's start losing their attention. There is the effect of the climate here too, because the humidity, the temperature, it all impacts things. Therefore after a while they can lose their attention and miss certain things or they stop having fun and just learn, just lesson, they enter into a different state of mind... I think it is better for it to be in parts. So they will not be distracted, they will be better absorbed, it will stick in their minds better and they will spend the rest of the day,

I'm not talking about half the day. When we finish a tour at 5pm that we started at 7 or 8 in the morning and return the students to their place of accommodation, I believe in the remaining time they are able to practice related to the new place they have reached in their life in particular. If they will be working in that area, they will be able to slowly form friendships with hotel owners, restaurant owners, people that will help them and that they will see a lot of, they will need time for that too." (G8)

Another participant again stated that the period was sufficient but that the tour route had to be re-arranged every year and that it would be better to have it done in one tour.

"...I think a period of a month is actually sufficient. Of course the tour routes need to revise each year considering the impact of tourism popularity in Turkey, again the touristic infrastructure in Turkey and reserves. For example, this year the Black Sea could suddenly become popular. In that case, the program in that area should be intensified... I think 36 days is sufficient, yes... There could be this advantage to it being done in one tour go, without break and by using time well they can be added to the army of guides quickly, otherwise the process will be extended, and with those disconnections there will be lack of concentration arising." (G9)

Another participant said that while there were advantages to the tour being split into segments, it was more suitable for it to be done in one tour considering the financial situations of the students.

"With the price it is more suitable to do it in one go, there are a lot of different factors that make the parted option advantageous, but with the price etc., I find it better that it is done in one go." (G2)

Participant G7 also stated that the practice tour should be parted, and that close locations could be visited with short tours.

"I think it's better to be parted, and more detailed, when you are tired your capacity to understand declines, for 10 days you are constantly on the road, and from exhaustion your capacity to understand drops obviously. That is why I think it would be better to have small areas, important ancient cities, 3-4 days, 2-3 days to closer points." (G7)

When considering that students participating in the practice tour take the tour guide leading them as a role model, the importance of the tour guide cannot be denied. Therefore, one of the purposes of the study is to determine the competence of the tourist guide. Most of the

participants stated that the tour guides leading the practice tours were adequate. The opinions of some participants are given below.

"I believe that our guide teachers are well qualified. Because the practical education, the practice is very important for the education of the students. So I do not think that there is a problem with this. Let me put it this way, I know that the guide teachers during the students practice tours have the required history knowledge, timing, guiding, guiding of students, and imparting of knowledge capacity for the students." (G8)

"I remember very well, he was very knowledgeable, the preparation of that tour was very intense in terms of information... our experienced guide teacher would give a conference style serious briefing and we would go with him step by step." (G9)

Two participants noted that some of the professional tour guides leading the practice tours were sufficient, while others were not.

"The choice of teachers is also very important. Some guide teachers are good, as far as I can see from the outside, some are not so qualified ... The tour guides taking part in the practice tours having sufficient knowledge is one of the important criteria. Of course having professional experience... this is a little bit down to luck. When considering these guides with 10-15 years criteria, knowing a place well, being a good guide, does not mean that you can teach well... They may be good guides, but perhaps not good guide teachers. I am sure this is considered when they are chosen. In other words, their attitudes and behaviour is as important as their knowledge of General Culture, Archaeology, Mythology, History, Art History. These practice tours are good criteria for guide students and if they see a good guide leading them, it will be a good motivation for them in the future starting their careers." (G1)

"... as far as I can remember so far back, there were very good guides, who taught us who explained things, there were also bad guide teachers who did not know much at all ..." (G6)

Another participant stated that students take good professional tour guides as a role model.

"...If they go with good guides it is very useful. Because they are able to see them as role models, they take what they see, the technical details as an example and they stay in contact. Our market is not one where we can lose touch. We see each other, we come across each other." (G2)

The same participant advised guide candidates participating in practice tours to read a lot in order to be a good guide.

“People who will become guides, our future colleagues, they need to be aware that they will be guides in Anatolia. They need to know that in a place like Anatolia where cultures survive, that as much as the parts that require little expertise, they are also face to face with situations that will require you to work more. They must read a lot, I don't think it is enough... A guide must be a person of the world. They must have a view on sustainable tourism and what it is, ecotourism and what it is, so in addition to a daily income, they must be a representative of responsible tourism, or the guide must know that their own guiding life will not have a future. Therefore, they should know the subjects outside the profession well.” (G2)

Some participants also emphasized that it is important that the tour guide is not only knowledgeable, but also experienced in showing how the tour is carried out during the practice tour. Participants' opinions are as follows:

“One must not benefit just from their knowledge, but their experiences too. In that case the qualification of the guide is very important, their knowledge. Obviously the students from university, from the courses, they have learned many things. But they learn how to use that knowledge from the tour guide leading them.” (G4)

“...the person leading, the guide teacher or teachers must have done that tour at least once, they must be familiar with the area.” (G5)

“The level of competence of the person organizing the tour needs to be high. Because it must be with a very experienced guide or a very experienced instructor. In terms of knowing the roads, giving the details when you arrive, even very small details are very important for a guide. The name of a mountain, the height of the mountain, or mythological knowledge, the ancient name of that place, the mythological narratives of the past, the historical details ... this is very very important, but in addition they must have practical intelligence, at every problem that is faced, because naturally you will be faced with them, a breakdown of the vehicle, sickness, emergency situation, they must have the ability to be practical and make instant decisions and solve the problem. Of course, this also requires experience. In other words, the selection of experienced, qualified people is very important for the organization of the tour.” (G7)

Another participant has stated that a tour guide undertakes many roles and must be multifaceted.

"... as a guide we are not only guides who have educated ourselves to be guides who provide information or guides that ensure the tour is fun, at the same time we are health care providers, at the same time we are psychiatrists. Because we do not only work with certain age groups, sometimes we lead families, sometimes people who are alone in Turkey, who are spending their lives alone and who have come on vacation alone but are travelling in a group, with their different psychological states. So we need to be multifaceted. We have a theatrical life, because during our tours we have to have a positive movement, appearance, stance, guidance that will ensure that an entire group will easily take part in a single activity. I think all of this has to be imparted on the students that participate in the practice tours; they need to know to be prepared with this information. This could be by us, could be by the educators, instructors." (G8)

Participant G2 stated that the professional tour guides leading the practice tour are older, and that after a certain age a long tour can be very tiring, and therefore different guides could be used during the practice tours.

"It could be a different guide by region... A tour in one go is physically very tiring, that is why we have seen guides who are tired. Perhaps the tours being split into 2, the new one could bring a new flavour, a new style, but it is debateable, because we can see they get tired, it is not easy after a certain age being on a tour for 36-40 days every day, getting up in the early hours of the morning is of course tiring." (G2)

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this study is to determine the adequacy of domestic practice tours within the framework of tour guide education, and the scope of the study is composed of professional tour guides working in the tourism sector and tourism / tour guidance program academicians providing education in universities. A semi-structured interview technique was used in the study which was conducted using the qualitative method.

As a result of interviews carried out on tour guide domestic practice visits; the perceptions of academicians on the domestic practice tours carried out within the scope of the tour guide education, were gathered under the titles of turning theory to practice, entertainment, necessity and obligation, intense program and tour organization. The perceptions of the

professional tour guides are; necessity, one of the foundation stones, turning theory to practice, learning the technical aspect of the profession, seeing on site, high cost, entertainment, orientation and accommodation. While the strongest perception of academicians towards the practice tour is turning theoretical information learned during education to practice, while for professional guides it was the requirement of a powerful perception for the practice tour. This result shows that there are differences in perception of domestic practice tours within the scope of tour guide training between academicians and tour guides. In a study conducted with students, Karaman et al. (2012) also noted the importance of practical knowledge and the practice tour in guide training. Likewise, Erdem & Etiz (2012) also stated that students saw the domestic practice tour as the most important education they received.

It is observed that the positive aspects of the practice tour as mentioned by the academicians are turning theory to practice, the practice period, learning the profession, seeing on site, and Academician-Student relationship. Tour guides have mentioned the importance of the tour guide, seeing on site, preparation for the profession and entertainment as the positive sides of the practice tour. It is possible to say that the opinions of academicians and tour guides are different regarding the positive aspects of the practice tours. Similarly, Erdem & Etiz (2012) also state that tour guide students are positively influenced by the guide practice tour, which transforms theoretical knowledge into practice and is more effective and efficient than theoretical knowledge.

Both the academicians and the tour guides who are in the industry have stated that there are no negative aspects of the practice tours, but that certain difficulties experienced can be listed as negatives. The academicians in tour guide education have stated the tours having long duration, lack of authority and discipline, guide selection, regional tours, TUREB organizing the tours and having a high cost, while tour guides have stated that the high cost, the students feeling like customers, the students seeing the tour as a chore, an outside agency organizing the tour, difficulty in operations, tiredness, loss of concentration, not knowing the traditions and language of the region as negatives. Similarly; Yenipinar et al. (2014) also stated, in a study reviewing the tour guide profession act, that interviewed academicians and professional organizations stated that the cost of practice tours was high, however they see the organization of practice tours by TUREB as a positive. The people interviewed in the study, despite stating there were no negative aspects of the practice tours, showed differences in expressing the negative experiences during the tours.

The domestic practice tours within the scope of tour guide education are 36 calendar days. It is possible to go regionally, or to complete the tour in one go. It is possible to say that

both have advantages and disadvantages. While giving their opinions on one of the aims of the study, the duration of the practice tours, the interviewed persons have expressed their views within the framework of advantages and disadvantages. Both academicians who are in education and professional tour guides in the tourism industry have expressed that the duration of the practice tour is long and that it should be segmented (by region). A 36 day uninterrupted tour is very difficult for both students and for tour guides. They may face situations of exhaustion, lack of motivation, lack of concentration etc. Students can lose interest after a week or 10 days, no matter how many different places they have seen. Similarly, Eker (2015) in a study stated that the tour guide domestic practice tour must be carried out in segments (by region). In addition, Eker (2015) found that the number of days of the practice tour was insufficient, concluding that it would be better for guide candidates to see more destinations by increasing the number of days. Also, Karaman et al. (2012) agree that the students think that the duration of the tour should be extended. Included in the suggestions made in this study there should be an increase in the number of days and locations visited. Some researchers have stated that the tour guide practice tours cause serious financial pressure on students, that the given information is not sufficient, and that this can prevent the practice tour from achieving its objective (Karaman et al., 2012; Yenipinar & Zorkirişci, 2013).

Another purpose of the study is to determine whether the knowledge of professional tour guides leading the practice tour is sufficient or not. A majority of both academicians and tour guides emphasize that the professional tour guides leading the students on domestic practice tours are sufficient and important. Some participants however say they are inadequate. In a study, El-Sharkawy (2007) argues that Egyptian tour guides lack training and knowledge and that tour guide training programs should be developed.

Some of the tour guides interviewed within the scope of the study have stated that in addition to the knowledge of the professional tour guides, they must be experienced and multi-faceted. As students participating in the practice tours see the tour guides as “role models”, the tour guide is of great importance. Therefore, the professional tour guide leading the tour guide domestic practice tours must have a high level of knowledge and skill, strong communication skills and be able to lead the tour perfectly. Similarly; Christie and Mason (2003) also argue that good education will lead not only to the exchange of knowledge and skills, but also to changes in attitudes and behaviours, and that when a tour guide learns to criticize themselves, they will give more detailed information about a country, region etc. In a study carried out by Önen et al. (2016) on tour guide students, it emerged that the guide at the practice tour was found to be adequate in terms of knowledge and professional experience imparted during the practice tour.

The results of the study are believed to contribute to literature regarding tour guide education and practice tours carried out within the scope of that education. It is considered that as not many studies regarding tour guide domestic practice tours were found in literature, and the study covering both the academicians in the education field and professional tour guides in the tourism industry, the study will be a guide for studies carried out in the future.

SUGGESTIONS REGARDING TOUR GUIDE DOMESTIC PRACTICE TOURS

Within the scope of the study, various suggestions were put forward for TUREB and agencies that organize the practice tours. In this context it is possible to list the suggestions as follows:

- It is observed that when the practice tour duration is considered, a one-time 36 calendar day tour is long. When it is held regionally, seven parts is quite high. In this framework, the tour could be split into three parts of 10-15 days, and thus problems such as tiredness, low motivation, and loss of concentration can be alleviated.
- It is seen that some of the places seen on the practice tour is insufficient and some places are unnecessary. In this context, the tour program could be revised and places that are on the tour just because they are on route could be removed, and more important touristic places could be included in their place.
- It has been observed that lunch is not included in practice tours. Students have free time for lunch and thus have an opportunity to get to know the area better. However, since not all students are well off financially, this can lead to some problems. Therefore, for lunch a deal could be made with a restaurant and included in the tour program, thus saving time and again creating time for the students to explore the area.
- Despite professional tour guides receiving a national card, it is observed that they are more proficient in certain areas where they work. In this framework, the tour guides to take part in the practice tour could be selected according to the areas where they work and by using different guides, the future actors of tourism can be given the opportunity to see more examples.
- It has been seen that practice tours are awarded by tender to agencies. In this context, it could be arranged for the tours to be carried out by an experienced agency and the supervision provided.
- With regional practice tours, tour guides receiving regional cards are emerging. However, it seems unacceptable that tourism actors who will represent the country are only familiar with one region. In this context, by abolishing regional guiding, the future

tourism actors, or in other words candidate guides can be allowed to see all of Turkey and gain knowledge about the entire country.

- In order for the domestic practice tours to be memorable and for students to not forget where they have been, making video recordings by camera or smart phone, and to have knowledge of the area prior to going on the practice tour can help to make the tours more memorable.

LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE STUDIES

It is considered that the study fills the gaps in literature due to the method used, the subject not having been studied much, and having covered both academicians and tour guides. Nevertheless, the study has some limitations. A semi-structured interview was used in the study. In future studied a focus group could be held to create a rich data set and different results may be revealed. Due to the high number of professional tour guides, the generalization of the results could be increased by using survey.

Another limitation of the study is that interviews were held only with academicians in the education industry and professional tour guides in the tourism industry. In further studies, a more in depth investigation may be possible by including travel agencies, chambers of tour guides and TUREB.

Note: This study is derived from doctoral dissertation.

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