

Tour Agent and Tour Guide Discourse: Unity within Diversity

خطاب الوكيل السياحي والمرشد السياحي: الوحدة داخل التنوع

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Abstract

The present paper aims at exploring the tour agent and tour guide roles and discourses in the field of tourism in order to find out the potential differences between them. The study adopted an exploratory approach wherein the roles of both parties were studied and evaluated. The findings of the study showcased that there were distinct differences between their discourses as each role determined the discourse used when dealing with tourists. At the end, both of the tour agents and tour guides aspired to satisfy their customers and contribute to the development of the tourism industry.

Keywords: tourism industry, tour agent, tour guide, role, discourse.

الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف دور وخطاب كل من الوكيل السياحي والدليل السياحي في مجال عملهما من أجل معرفة الاختلافات المحتمل وجودها بينهما. اعتمدت الدراسة مقارنة استكشافية، حيث تمت دراسة أدوار كلا الطرفين وتقييمها. وأظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن هناك اختلافات واضحة بين خطاباتها، حيث أن دور كل منهما يحدد الخطاب المستخدم عند التعامل مع السياح. وفي الأخير، وفي الهدف المشترك لكليهما هو إرضاء عملائهما والمساهمة في تطوير الصناعة السياحية.

كلمات مفتاحية: الصناعة السياحية، الوكيل السياحي، الدليل السياحي، الدور، الخطاب.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is a thriving global sector that contributes significantly to the economic growth and cultural exchange. It is a complex and ever-evolving sector that relies on various stakeholders to ensure its smooth functioning. Two key figures play crucial roles in shaping the experiences of tourists when embarking on a journey to explore new destinations: tour agents and tour guides. While both professionals contribute to the overall travel experience, their roles, responsibilities, and modes of communication differ significantly. This paper aims to shed light on the distinctions between tour agent and tour guide discourse, exploring how their unique approaches enhance the travel experience for tourists.

2. Tour Agent's Roles

Tour agents play a vital role in facilitating travel experiences for individuals and groups. They are indispensable in the tourism industry as they provide expert guidance, personalized itineraries, and seamless travel arrangements, ultimately enhancing the overall travel experience for individuals and groups.

(Puri, 2009, p. 22) consider tour agents' roles pivotal in planning and organizing tours. (Goeldner, 2012) argue that a tour agent must be an "expert, knowledgeable in schedules, routing, lodging, currency, prices, regulations, destinations, and all other aspects of travel and travel opportunities." He is a middleman who sells the travel industry's parts to tourists.

Tour agents possess extensive knowledge about various destinations, including local customs, attractions, and hidden gems (Goeldner, 2012, p. 6) They act as a valuable resource for tourists, offering expert guidance and recommendations based on their experience and expertise. By leveraging their destination knowledge, tour agents can curate unique and tailored travel experiences that cater to the specific interests and preferences of their clients.

In the *Dictionary of Travel, Tourism and Hospitality*, (Medlik, 2003, p. 19) considers the tour agent: a person or organization selling travel services (such as

transportation, accommodation and inclusive tours) on behalf of principals (such as carriers, hotels and tour operators) for a commission. Most travel agents also normally provide ancillary services, such as obtaining passports and visas, traveller's cheques (traveler's checks), currencies and travel insurance. (p, 170)

One of the key roles of tour agents is their ability to create personalized itineraries. They consider the individual preferences, budget constraints, and time limitations of tourists to design itineraries that maximize their enjoyment and minimize logistical challenges. Whether it is a family vacation, adventure trip, or cultural exploration, tour agents can customize travel plans to ensure a seamless and memorable experience.

According to (Goeldner, 2012, p. 23), tour agents excel in handling the intricate logistics involved in travel arrangements. From booking flights and accommodations to arranging transportation and securing necessary permits, tour agents take care of the time-consuming and often complex tasks, allowing tourists to focus on enjoying their trip. Their established networks and partnerships with airlines, hotels, and local service providers enable them to secure competitive prices and exclusive deals, further enhancing the value they bring to tourists.

During travel, unexpected situations can arise, such as flight delays, lost luggage, or medical emergencies. Tour agents provide invaluable support and assistance, acting as a reliable point of contact for tourists. Their round-the-clock availability ensures that tourists have someone to turn to in times of need, offering peace of mind and prompt resolution of any issues that may arise.

3. Tour Guide's Roles

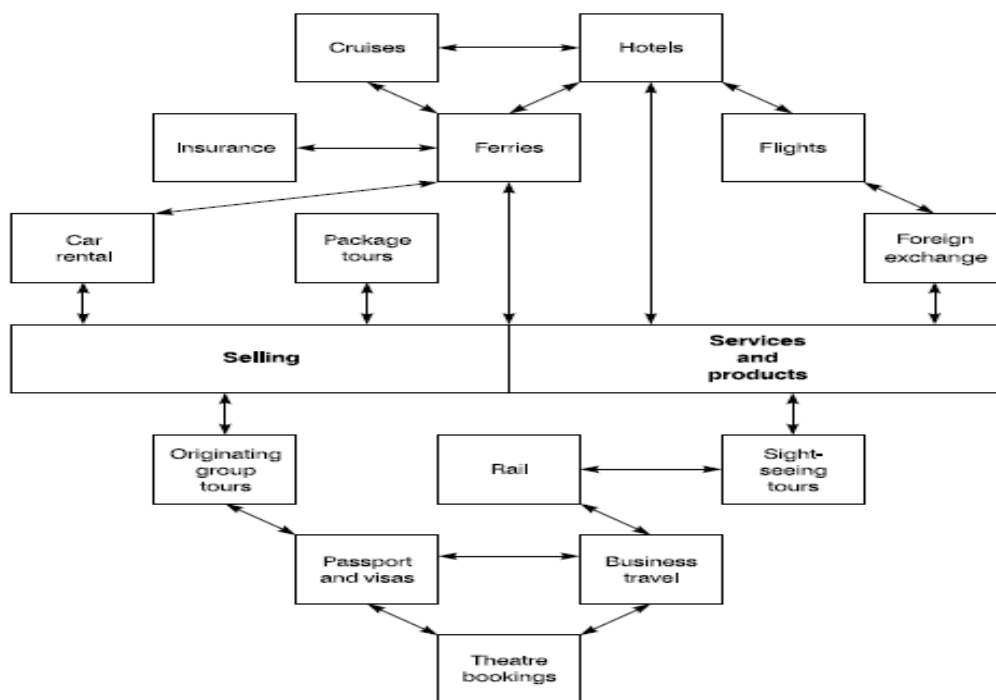
Within tourism industry, tour guides play crucial roles in enhancing the travel experience for tourists. They are indispensable as they serve as educators, cultural ambassadors, and facilitators, ensuring that tourists have enriching and enjoyable experiences. (Oxford English Dictionary, 1933, p. 99) considers a tour

guide the one who leads or shows the way, especially to a traveller in a strange country, especially one who is hired by a traveller or tourist to conduct and to point out objects of interest.

Tour guides educate tourists about the ecological importance of natural sites, promoting environmental conservation, and they provide information on flora, fauna, and ecosystems, raising awareness about biodiversity and sustainability (Al-Okaily, 2022, p. 7) They provide historical context, explaining the significance of landmarks, monuments, and cultural sites (Al-Okaily, 2022). They offer detailed explanations of local customs, traditions, and cultural practices, fostering cross-cultural understanding.

(Al-Okaily, 2022, p. 8) argues that tour guides serve as interpreters, facilitating communication between tourists and locals. They offer language assistance, enabling tourists to engage with locals and immerse themselves in the local culture. (Guzel, 2021, p. 22) consider them cultural ambassadors, facilitating interactions between tourists and local communities. They bridge language barriers, promote cultural exchange, and ensure respectful engagement, thereby fostering meaningful connections between visitors and the host culture.

Figure N°1: The Work of a Travel Agency



Source: (Syratt & Archer, 2003, p. 18)

Tour guides act as educators, providing valuable insights and information about the destinations visited (Guzel, 2021, p. 2) They educate tourists about local customs, traditions, and etiquette, ensuring respectful behaviour, and they promote cultural sensitivity, encouraging tourists to embrace diversity and avoid cultural misunderstandings (Kamel, 2021, p. 5) They possess in-depth knowledge of historical, cultural, and natural aspects, enabling them to offer engaging narratives and explanations. By sharing their expertise, tour guides enhance tourists' understanding and appreciation of the places they visit.

According to (Guzel, 2021, p. 5) tour guides handle transportation arrangements, ensuring smooth transitions between destinations. They navigate complex itineraries, optimizing time management and maximizing sightseeing opportunities (Kamel, 2021, p. 7) They act as facilitators, ensuring that tourists have seamless and enjoyable travel experiences. They handle logistics, provide recommendations, and offer personalized assistance, making the journey stress-

free and memorable.

Tour guides offer personalized recommendations for dining, shopping, and entertainment, enhancing the overall travel experience, and they provide assistance and support, addressing tourists' concerns and ensuring their comfort and safety (Guzel, 2021)

4. Tour Agent Discourse

A tour agent organises and sells package holidays or tours (Bateman, 2005). Tour agents, on the other hand, adopt a more formal and professional communication style. They utilize written communication, such as emails, brochures, and websites, to convey information about travel packages, itineraries, and pricing. Their discourse is structured, concise, and focused on providing accurate and detailed information to potential tourists.

Tour agents' discourse primarily focuses on practical information related to travel logistics, such as flight details, accommodation options, transportation, and visa requirements. They also highlight the unique selling points of travel packages, emphasizing the benefits and experiences tourists can expect. Their discourse aims to persuade potential tourists to choose their services and provide them with the necessary information to make informed decisions. Accordingly, tour agents' roles determine their discourse. This can be summarized as:

- Assistant: Tour agents assist tourists in selecting destinations, itineraries, and accommodations based on their preferences and budget.
- Information Provider: They provide detailed information about attractions, transportation options, and visa requirements, ensuring a smooth travel experience.
- Facilitator: They handle ticket bookings, transportation arrangements, and other logistical aspects, ensuring seamless transitions between destinations.
- Coordinator: They coordinate with local service providers, ensuring that tourists' needs are met throughout their journey.
- Supporter: Agents offer 24/7 support, addressing any concerns or

emergencies that may arise during the trip.

- Intermediate: They act as a bridge between tourists and service providers, ensuring effective communication and problem resolution.

5. Tour Guide Discourse

A tour guide is a person whose job is to accompany a group of tourists on a tour and give them information about the places they are visiting (Bateman, 2005). Tour guides employ a more interactive and conversational communication style. They use verbal and non-verbal cues, storytelling techniques, and visual aids to engage their audience. Their discourse is often spontaneous, adapting to the group's interests and needs. Tour guides also rely on their knowledge and expertise to answer questions and provide real-time information. Tour guides' roles decide the mode of language they use during their direct interactions with tourists.

Tour guides' discourse revolves around the destination itself, its history, culture, landmarks, and local customs. They provide in-depth knowledge, anecdotes, and personal experiences to enrich the tourists' understanding and connection with the place they are visiting. Their discourse often includes storytelling, humour, and engaging narratives to captivate the audience. This can be briefly stated in the following notes:

- a) Tour guides accompany tourists during their visits, offering real-time information and assistance.
- b) Guides provide historical, cultural, and geographical insights, enhancing tourists' understanding of the destination.
- c) Guides tailor their narratives to the interests and preferences of the group, ensuring an engaging and informative experience.
- d) They employ storytelling techniques to captivate tourists, making the information more relatable and memorable.
- e) Guides encourage active participation, involving tourists in activities such as local traditions, language lessons, or culinary experiences.

- f) They facilitate interactions between tourists and locals, fostering cultural exchange and creating a deeper connection with the destination.

6. Concluding Notes

- Both tour guides and tour agents are responsible for providing tourists with essential information. While tour guides offer on-the-ground knowledge, sharing historical facts, cultural insights, and practical details about destinations, tour agents provide pre-trip information, including itineraries, accommodation details, and transportation options. Both professionals aim to equip tourists with the necessary knowledge to make informed decisions and enhance their overall experience.
- Tour guides and tour agents employ different techniques to captivate their audience. Tour guides often weave narratives, bringing historical events and cultural anecdotes to life, engaging tourists on a personal level. Tour agents utilize storytelling to promote destinations, crafting enticing narratives that inspire tourists to embark on new adventures. Both professionals understand the power of storytelling in creating a sense of connection and fostering a desire to explore.
- Both tour guides and tour agents strive to create memorable experiences for tourists. Tour guides achieve this by curating unique itineraries, showcasing hidden gems, and facilitating interactions with locals. On the other hand, tour agents meticulously design travel packages, incorporating immersive activities and exclusive experiences. By going the extra mile, both professionals aim to leave a lasting impression on tourists, ensuring their journey is unforgettable.

Tour guides are on-the-ground experts who accompany tourists during their trips, providing them with in-depth knowledge about the destination, its history, culture, and attractions. Their primary responsibility is to ensure that tourists have an engaging and informative experience. Tour agents, on the other hand, work behind the scenes, organizing and coordinating travel arrangements for

individuals or groups. Their primary role is to plan itineraries, book accommodations, arrange transportation, and handle logistics to ensure a seamless travel experience.

Tour guides directly interact with tourists, acting as their personal ambassadors throughout the journey. They tailor their discourse to suit the needs and interests of the specific group they are guiding. Their communication style is often conversational, engaging, and interactive, aiming to create a friendly and immersive experience.

Tour agents, in contrast, communicate with potential tourists before the trip. They provide information, answer queries, and offer recommendations to help clients make informed decisions. Their discourse is more formal and professional, focusing on conveying essential details and ensuring customer satisfaction.

Tour guides have the advantage of personal interaction, allowing them to adapt their discourse based on the group's dynamics, interests, and preferences. They can provide real-time explanations, anecdotes, and engage in conversations, making the experience more personalized and memorable.

Tour agents, while striving to meet individual preferences, often rely on standardized information and pre-designed itineraries. Their discourse is more structured and less personalized, as they cater to a broader audience and need to ensure consistency in their offerings.

Conclusion

Tour guides and tour agents play complementary roles in the travel and tourism industry. Their discourse differs significantly in terms of purpose, audience, communication style, and content. Tour agent discourse revolves around behind-the-scenes pre-trip planning, logistical arrangements, and customer service, while tour guides provide on-the-ground expertise and personalized guidance, narratives, and interactive experiences. These unique

contributions of both tour guides and tour agents make tourists informed and help them enjoy their travel experiences.

Providing high quality accommodations and social services for tourists is a major issue that makes a common end for the tour agent and tour guide. Both of them aspire to make the trip pleasurable, satisfying, and memorable. Achieving these objectives requires them to offer a complex mix of services to provide the customers with what they need. Their roles diverge in terms of function yet converge in the scheme of serving tourists and boosting the tourism industry.

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