Exploring the Profile of Tourist Guides in South Africa

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Abstract

South Africa has much to offer in terms of tourism attractions and destinations. The tourism industry strives to meet the requirements of various forms of tourism by providing facilities and services to meet the unique needs of visitors. One such service is tourist guiding at specific attractions and destinations. Tourist guides in South Africa are required to be qualified and registered with the relevant authorities. To date, only limited research has been done to determine the profile of tourist guides operating in South Africa. The main objective of this study was, therefore, to develop a profile of the South African tourist guide. The study adopted a quantitative research approach using a survey research design. The target population consisted of registered tourist guides in South Africa, and 320 questionnaires were completed and analysed. The main findings of the study revealed that the majority of respondents were citizens of South Africa with English as their home language and may considered to be young, according to their age profile. The findings of this study contribute to the limited academic research on the profile of tourist guides in South Africa and will be beneficial to travel agents, tour operators, protected areas and other tourism operating companies by enabling them to employ the most suitable candidate for the required service.

Keywords: Tourism; tourist guide; tourist guide profile; tourist guiding; tour operator

Introduction

South Africa is a popular tourist destination for tourists from all over the world for authentic, exciting natural and cultural experiences, to explore and discover beautiful landscapes, practise outdoor and adventure activities, and admire and experience South Africa's diverse cultures. In addition, tourists visit South Africa to interact with the residents of the country and learn about different lifestyles as well as to experience flora and fauna in national parks and other protected areas (Makiti Guides & Tours, 2007). According to Heakal (2017), the majority of tourist destinations in South Africa are found in three of its nine provinces, namely the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. Examples are Table Mountain, Robben Island, Cape Town beaches, Victoria and Alfred Waterfront, Drakensberg Mountains, the Winelands and the Garden Route, Sun City, the Cradle of Humankind, Soweto, and the Cape Floral Kingdom.

When tourists visit South Africa, they seek a broad spectrum of services during their trip. These probably are, amongst others, transport to attractions, sightings and activities to do and see at the destination, food and drink, safety and security, communication and

accommodation. While providing all these services, tour operators, travel agents and other tourism intermediaries organise guided package tours for the tourists at specific attractions, in provinces and throughout the entire country, which could require the services of a tourist guide as one of the services included in the guided package tour. Guiding is the service provided by the tourist guide. Rabotić (2010) states that it is difficult to package tourism services for mass tourism without the services of tourist guides. Therefore, providing quality service is one of the most competitive advantages of South African tourism and the tour operators and travel agencies. By 31 March 2017, South Africa had about 10 000 registered tourist guides operating in the tourism industry. However, according to industry stakeholders, not all operating tourist guides are legally registered (National Department of Tourism [NDT], 2017). The objective of this study was to determine the profile of registered tourist guides in South-Africa in order to better understand this dynamic landscape. A profile of tourist guides would help tourists, tour operators and travel agents to employ qualified tourist guides who could meet the needs, such as language proficiency, of both local and international tourists.

Literature review
The growth of a destination and associated attractions depends on several factors; one of the most pivotal is the achievement of tourist satisfaction. Although total satisfaction of tourists' needs is not the goal in itself, striving to achieve this may enable the attraction to attain its own goals, such as maximised profits (Strydom et al., 2000). To achieve maximum tourist satisfaction, tourist guides providing guiding services at the destination should be carefully selected to ensure the continuity and growth of a destination. Through market segmentation, one could develop a tourist guide profile that would enable tourism destinations and tourism employers to hire a suitable tourist guide with the right personality and skills to satisfy specific clients' needs (George, 2019).

Tourist guiding skills and responsibilities
A tourist guide can be defined as a person who communicates knowledge and gives travellers the correct information about a destination (Uys, 2009). Uys (2009:17) adds that a guide is "someone who acts as an intermediator between the natural and cultural heritage of an area and the clients, taking on an educational role". The European Federation of Tourist Guide Associations [EFTGA] (2014) elaborates further on these definitions, and characterises a tourist guide as an individual who leads groups or individual visitors from foreign countries or from the domestic country to the landmarks, destinations and galleries of a city or region and other places of interest to interpret surrounding features in an exciting and entertaining manner into a language familiar to the visitors.

Professional tourist guides in South Africa not only guide local tourists, but also tourists who come from different countries across the globe. For this reason, they are expected to be fluent enough in English and at least one foreign language to be able to speak it competently. Knowledge of a foreign language is of great importance to communicate effectively and transmit the information correctly to foreign visitors (Irigüler & Güler, 2016). According to Gnanapala and Sandaruwani (2016), most tourist guides globally are unable to speak a foreign language. This makes it challenging for travel agents and tour operators to find qualified tourist guides who can cater for the needs of emerging markets. Thus, language training and learning opportunities are vital for empowering guides.

The roles and duties of guides have been described as those of a pathfinder, intermediary, buffer, pioneer, information provider, social broker, spark, counsellor-guide, teacher, entertainer, leader, interpreter, performer and environment defender (Huang et al.,

2010; Nyahunvzvi & Njerekai, 2013; Min, 2012). In addition to these roles, tourist guides assist tourists in learning about the places they visit through high-quality interpretation.

Hoang (2015), Hurombo, (2016) and Prakash et al. (2010) have summarised the different roles of a tourist guide as presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Published references to roles of tourist guide

Researchers	Year	Roles of a tourist guide
Tilden	1957	Interpreter
McKean	1976	Cultural broker
Gronroos	1978	Salesperson
De Kadt	1979	Mediator
Nettekoven	1979	Mediator
Schmidt	1979	Buffer, mediator and intermediary
Van and Berghe	1980	Middleman
Holloway	1981	Information giver, actors, teacher, mediator, catalyst, ambassador and cultural broker
Pearce	1982	Teacher, organiser and buffer
Schuchat	1983	Organiser
Cohen	1985	Mediator, mentor, path breaker, pathfinder and leader
Fine and Speer	1985	Caretaker, teacher and salesperson
Katz	1985	Cultural broker and mediator
Geva and Goldman	1991	Leader
Hughes	1991	Information giver and organiser
Pond	1993	Teacher, facilitator, host, manager and public relation representative
Ryan and Dewar	1995	Intermediary
Gurung, Simmons and Devlin	1996	Mediator
Dahles	1998	Entrepreneur
Wong, Ap and Sandiford	1998	Buffer
Bras	1999	Entrepreneur
Ap and Wong	2001	Cultural broker
Mancini	2001	Teacher
Chowdhary and Prakash	2008	Entrepreneur
Huang, Cathy and Chan	2010	Interpreter, information giver, leader and motivator of conservation values/role model
Yamada	2011	Interpreter, information giver and leader
Min	2012	Transportation, accommodation and meal arranger
Weiler and Walker	2014	Interpreter, information giver, leader and navigator, protector, broker and mediator

Source: Source: Hoang (2015); Hurombo (2016); Prakash, Chowdhary and Sunayana (2010)

Tourist guides are remarkably useful in numerous roles. From the tourists' viewpoint, they are the guides, animators, tour leaders and teachers. As representatives of tour operators, they are the speakers, speaking to the image of the company, and the sellers, seeking as much income as possible for their company and their own benefit and an improvement in their social status. From the host destination's perspective, they are the interpreters making sense of the destination's culture and legacy, and the mediators intervening between the host community and its guests (Kassawnh et al., 2019). In general, authors portray tourist guides as people who inform visitors about what they see, hear and experience at the location to guarantee that those visitors understand and appreciate the environment visited. Tourist guides are some of the key frontline players in the tourism industry (Ap & Wong, 2001). In addition, a tourist guide can be a pioneer who stops at certain places amid guided experiences, performs a mix of drilled and extemporised ceremonies, shows the way, focuses on specific aspects, tells tourists what to look at, and where to position themselves to see the interest or attraction as a whole (Zillinger et al.,2012). Ulo and Hallo (2011) concur by stating that guides are important for educating tourists about the significance of preserving natural sites and natural resources.

Types of guided tours

Tourist guides in South Africa are fairly diverse and are categorised into different types that determine the focus of the guided experience, namely nature, culture and adventure guides (Field Guides Association of Southern Africa [FGASA], 2013). Some guides specialise in one category, while other are diverse and can conduct guided experiences that include elements of nature, adventure and culture. In South Africa a qualification, obtainable through a certified tourist guide preparing supplier, is required to work as a qualified and lawful tourist guide. All licensed tourist guide training schools are required to enrol with the Culture, Art, Tourism, Hospitality and Sports Sector Education and Training Authority [CATHSSETA] (FGASA, 2013). To obtain a qualification in tourist guiding, a student guide is required to undergo training in a particular field of guiding. An evaluation process is compulsory before a guide can be declared competent for that particular field in guiding. Therefore, to qualify as a tourist guide in South Africa, a student guide will need to demonstrate competence in both theoretical and specific guiding skills in order to be awarded a Further Education and Training Certificate in Tourism Guiding.

In South Africa, tourist guides may operate at different destinations (as site guides) or act in specific guiding capacities, which means that they have options for operating in various categories. Tourist guides may only operate in the category in which they have been trained and licensed (in the case of provincial and national guides). Guided tours can be categorised based on purpose, settings and activity, subject matter, length, types of visitors, and the environment in which tourist guiding operations are conducted (FGASA, 2013; Weiler & Black, 2014). Weiler and Black (2014) and FGASA (2013) outline three broad types of further areas of specialisation for tourist guides in each guiding category. Table 2 sets out three subcategories of guiding types and a few areas of specialities.

Table 2: Categories of tourist guiding in South Africa

Category	Description
Nature guiding	Leading a group of people at protected areas and other natural environments identifying both animals and plants, demonstrating an understanding of basic animal behavioural patterns and ecological principles, and interpreting the signs and sounds of nature. Within the field of nature guiding a guide may specialise in birding, horse guiding, coastal or marine guiding, botanical guiding, trails guiding and conservation, amongst others.
Cultural guiding	Leading a group of visitors or individuals at the heritage and historic sites, heritage attractions and museums, indigenous sites and telling the story about the places. Within the field of cultural guiding a guide may specialise in cultural centre guiding, story-telling, townships guiding, guided tours in art, cultural, natural history and 'struggle site' tours, Mandela route and the Hector Peterson route.
Adventure guiding	Leading a group of people on outdoor recreation leisure activities that involve an element of risk. Within the field of adventure guiding a guide may specialise in activities such as 4x4 trails, kayaking, quad biking, river rafting and abseiling, amongst others.

Source: FGASA (2013) and Weiler and Black (2014)

According to Melia (2017), qualifications and educational standards for guiding vary substantially through the world, with some guides being educated to university degree standard, especially in Europe, while others have no qualifications whatsoever. De Beer, Rogerson and Rogerson (2014) state that tour operators determine the remuneration of tourist guides in accordance with their level of education and experience in the field of tourist guiding. The intangible factors of personality and language ability are also factors that influence tour operators' decisions on how much to pay tourist guides per day or after each trip. Furthermore, De Beer et al. (2014) found that only a small number of tourist guides have carried on working as tourist guides for more than ten years because of the 'stressful' and 'unfriendly' working conditions.

Developing a profile of tourist guides

Profiling is the practice of attempting to understand a person or group based on general characteristics such as demographics, current behaviours, knowledge, values, aspirations and emotions (Walters & Bakker, 2017). Profiling helps to identify and group individuals with similar interests and characteristics into a segment, and each segment is a group of homogeneous individuals whom marketers and employers can identify and target, and with whom they can communicate (Walters & Bakker, 2017). Should sectoral stakeholders such as service providers and education and training authorities understand the characteristics of a professional tourist guide, it would assist them to develop the guiding sector optimally. It would also enable human resource management (HRM) teams to obtain a better overall picture of the guiding landscape.

Lee, Morrison and O'Leary (2006) indicate that researchers make widespread use of various segmentation bases; both an a priori segmentation approach (such as geographic and demographic segmentation) and an a posteriori segmentation approach (psychographic and behavioural segmentation). As this study aimed to develop a profile of tourist guides of South Africa, the researcher followed an a priori segmentation approach, focusing on behavioural and demographic segmentation in the form of the geographic and socioeconomic reasons for choosing guiding as a profession. The classification bases for segmenting the tourist guides, with examples, are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Classification bases for segmenting tourist guides

Types of segmentation	Example
Geographic segmentation	• Geographic region (province): Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North-West, and Western Cape
Reason for choosing guiding	• Motivation for enrolling in a guiding course or following a guiding career
Behavioural segmentation	• Benefits sought • Loyalty status
Demographic segmentation	• Education: Matric, diploma, degree or postgraduate qualification • Age • Gender
Socioeconomic segmentation	• Occupation: Student, housewife, retired, manager or owner • Level of education • Income • Occupation structure: Part-time or full time

Source: *Compiled by author*

For the purposes of this study, the respondents are divided into three selected segmentations, namely a geographic segmentation, demographic segmentation and socioeconomic segmentation. The segments in which employees or respondents are categorised are discussed below. Geographic segmentation separates the individuals based on diverse geographical zones or elements such as countries or nations and regions, provinces, cities, neighbourhoods or suburbs, city or metro size, and climate (George, 2019). The presumption is that individuals with comparable characteristics tend to live in the same area and thus have comparative buying patterns (Cant & Van Heerden, 2017). Demographic segmentation divides the individuals into groups based on variables such as age, gender, home language, marital status, gross annual income, occupation, education, and nationality or province of residence (Terblanche, 2012). This is a common technique of segmenting the market, as consumers' needs, wants and usage rates are frequently linked carefully with demographic variables (George, 2019).

Socioeconomic status can be described as a combination of factors including income, level of education, size of landholding, pattern of food consumption, caloric intake per head, occupational structure, and other basic amenities and infrastructure facilities. The disposable

income of an individual plays an important role in the decision to buy anything (Cant & Van Heerden, 2017).

Research is required to profile professional tourist guides. If too little is known about who guides tourists at destinations, the limited selection process by tourism employers might be used in the wrong market segment (employee selection). The tour operator sector plays an important role in the employment of tourist guides in South Africa. A small number of large operators dominate the tour operating sector in South Africa (De Beers, 2011). The tourist guides are mostly employed or contracted by the tour operating companies on a daily basis, with only a few guides employed permanently. The problem that tourism businesses such as travel agencies and tour operators have to deal with, is the hiring of potentially illegal and unqualified tourist guides (Hoang, 2015).

To attract visitors despite increasing competition in the amusement and diversion industry, tourism managers should make sure that they contract employable guides with desirable capabilities. The service quality at attractions should fulfil the ever-expanding needs and requests of the advanced visitor. Tourist guides are representatives of travel agencies and tour operators, and have to be carefully chosen to guarantee that the most excellent candidate is available to perform guiding. This study was conducted to construct a profile of tourist guides in South Africa to assist the guiding industry in choosing the best tourist guides by utilising the characteristics of qualified guides. Managers expect guides to supply a high-quality service to visitors, as well as to oversee the group, the schedule and other logistical aspects of the experience. This should be done not only to fulfil the visitor's expectations, but also to benefit tourism companies. The next step is to determine who the current guides are at the South African tourist destinations.

Methodology

This study made use of a descriptive quantitative research approach. The target population included all registered tourist guides of South Africa. A non-probability sampling technique, more specifically convenience sampling, was applied. The population surveyed in this study comprised the registered tourist guides in South Africa. Information on the basic characteristics of tourist guides who responded to the survey is essential for the interpretation of findings presented later in this study and can provide an approximate indication of the representativeness of the survey. A survey link (electronic survey) was e-mailed to guides listed on provincial databases, and out of 3 000 emails sent, a total of 320 completed questionnaires were returned. The rationale behind using online surveys is that they have the advantage that respondents in dispersed geographical areas can be included in the target population, they can be completed in the respondent's own time, and the anonymity of the respondents is ensured (Glover & Bush, 2005). In addition, online surveys have the convenience that the responses can be entered directly into a database and that translation mistakes are reduced (Andrews et al., 2003). A survey was developed after a thorough literature review. Previous studies by Hurombo (2016), Melia (2017) and Terblanche (2012) were incorporated in the plan of the survey.

Information from the online survey was coded into numerical representations and captured in Microsoft Excel. The collected information was factually dissected by utilising the STATA Version 15 program. Descriptive insights were utilised in this study, as were t-tests and Pearson's chi-square test to test for association between two categorical factors. The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to test the relationship to indicate an affiliation between two quantitative factors. The survey was particularly planned for this study and the reliability of the questions in the survey was tested by utilising the Cronbach alpha coefficient, where all variables scored above 0.8 in this regard.

Results

The primary objective of this paper is to develop a profile of registered tourist guides in South Africa. To achieve this, pre-determined socio-economic, geographic and demographic descriptors applicable to tourist guides were identified. The univariate statistics for the socio-economic, geographic and demographic variables in the questionnaire obtained the profile of tourist guides in South Africa. Descriptive statistics was run on respondents' demographic, socio-economic and geographic variables and will be presented in three parts, namely a description of respondent demographics, socio-economic results and lastly geographic information on the respondents.

Demographic descriptors

Demographic segmentation divides the individuals into groups based on variables such as age, gender, home language, marital status and ethnicity (Hurombo, 2016; Terblanche, 2012). A summary of the demographic profile of the respondents is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Demographic profile of respondents

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	204	63.75
	Female	116	36.25
Age	21 years	2	0.63
	22 −28 years	41	12.89
	29−35 years	61	19.18
	36−42 years	50	15.72
	43−49 years	47	14.78
	50−56 years	33	10.38
	57−63 years	45	14.15
	64−70 years	27	8.49
	71−77 years	12	3.77
Home language	English	165	51.56
	Afrikaans	64	20.00
	Sepedi	3	0.94
	isiZulu	15	4.69
	Xitsonga	7	2.19
	Tshivenda	2	0.63
	Setswana	8	2.50
	isiNdebele	4	1.25
	isiXhosa	14	4.38
	siSwati	3	0.94
	Sesotho	5	1.56
	Shona	1	0.31
	German	18	5.63
	French	5	1.56
	Chinese	1	0.31
	Russian	2	0.63
	Dutch	2	0.63
	Portuguese	1	0.31
Ability to speak a foreign language	Yes	93	39.69
	No	127	60.31
Areas of guiding specialisation	Adventure guide	15	4.69
	Culture guide	112	35
	Nature guide	82	25.63
	Nature and adventure guide	16	5
	Nature and culture guide	61	19.06
	All areas of guiding	34	10.63

Source: *Compiled by author*

From Table 4 it is clear that the respondents were mostly males (64%) from South Africa, 45 years of age on average and spoke English as their home language (52%). The results also revealed that the respondents primarily specialised in cultural guiding (35%). According to Hoang (2015) and Huang et al. (2010), the tourist guiding profession seems to be dominated

by males; not only in South Africa, but also globally. This is mainly due to the working conditions, such as working for long hours and travelling to faraway places, being perceived to be more suitable for males. The results contradict the findings of Melia (2017), who found that the industry is dominated by females due to the part-time and seasonal nature of the job. For perhaps the same reasons, tourist guiding appeals to an older age group.

A total 60% of respondents did not speak a foreign language. Some roles of the tourist guide require mastery of a foreign language, as that would help tourist guides to communicate and interact with different tourists from cultures across the globe. This might indicate that there are insufficient foreign language-speaking tourist guides in South Africa. This research confirms the findings of Gnanapala and Sandaruwani (2016), who indicated that most tourist guides internationally do not speak a foreign language. The tourist guide needs to be able to speak a range of languages, including their home language or local languages, and foreign languages, to be able to serve many markets competently. Organisations such as EFTGA (2014) and Irigüler and Güler (2016) also confirm that tourist guides should be able to speak a range of languages. Furthermore, the results indicate that 6% of the respondents were able to communicate in German, followed by French (2%), as the two foreign languages most spoken by tourist guides in South Africa.

Socio-economic descriptors

Socioeconomics refers to the interaction between social and economic factors. These factors relate to and influence one another. For example, employment will dictate income. The salary level regularly relates to the level of education and the level of education makes a difference to direct one's work and duties (Terblanche, 2012). The socioeconomic profiles of the respondents are illustrated in Table 5

The findings shown in Table 5 indicate that most of the respondents were well-educated and experienced, with 67% having tertiary qualifications ranging from certificates to postgraduate degrees, while 44% had been guiding for more than ten years. This research confirms the findings by De Beer et al. (2014), who found that only a few tourist guides have worked in the guiding industry for more than ten years. The respondents' annual income varied between R50 001 and R450 000. Five percent of guides earned R450 000 or more per annum. The respondents conducted guided experiences at least three days in a month (20%) for groups of eight or fewer persons (50%). Salary and other incentives that come with this career may not be appealing to young tourist guides who are trying to make a living. This further suggests that persons earning less than R50 000 must have some other form of income such as a pension, other employment, or a partner with an income, as it would be very difficult to live on R50 000 or less per annum (Melia, 2017).

The tourist guide profession seems to be a seasonal or part-time job, as 58% of the respondents worked between three and 15 days a month. This research confirms the findings of Melia (2017), who indicated that the tourist guiding profession is characterised as a freelance, seasonal and part-time job. This seems to suggest that the guides who work for only a limited number of days in a month must have another form of employment as well, work for more than one tourist company, or are retired.

Table 5: Socioeconomic profile of respondents

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Highest level of education	Never attended school	1	0.31
	Primary school	1	0.31
	High School	104	32.50
	Diploma/First degree	134	41.88
	Honours/B-Tech	26	8.13
	Certificate	38	11.88
	Other	16	5.00
Years working as a tourist guide	1 year or less	10	3.13
	2 years	22	6.88
	3 years	37	11.56
	4 years	31	9.69
	5 years	20	6.25
	6 years	16	5
	7 years	13	4.06
	8 years	17	5.31
	9 years	12	3.75
	10 years more	142	44.38
Gross annual income	Less than R50 000	89	27.81
	R50 001−R150 000	119	37.19
	R150 001−R250 000	58	18.13
	R250 001−R350 000	29	9.06
	R350000 – R450 000	9	2.81
	More than R450 000	16	5
Working days in a month	1−3 days in a month	64	20
	4−6 days in a month	35	10.94
	7−9 days in a month	25	7.81
	10−12 days in a month	28	8.75
	13−15 days in a month	33	10.31
	16−18 days in a month	18	5.63
	19−21 days in a month	35	10.94
	22−25 days in a month	32	10
	26−28 days in a month	25	7.81
	29−31 days in a month	25	7.81
Average tour group size	8 or less	160	50
	9 to 16	74	23.13
	17 to 24	63	19.69
	25 to 32	3	0.94
	33 to 40	5	1.56
	41 to 48	5	1.56
	49 to 56	1	0.31
	57 to 64	1	0.31
	65 and more	8	2.5

Source: Compiled by author

Geographic descriptors

A summary of the geographic profile of respondents is presented in Table 6. Table 6 shows that the tourist guides who guide tourists at attractions in South Africa are mainly South Africans (99%) who reside in the Western Cape Province (42%). In terms of provincial numbers, the largest share of registered tourist guides is based respectively in the three provinces of the Western Cape, Gauteng and Mpumalanga, followed by the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo. The reason why many tourist guides are registered in the Western Cape could be because most of the top tourist attractions found in South Africa are in the Western Cape, for example, Table Mountain, Robben Island, Cape Town beaches, Victoria and Alfred Waterfront and the Cape Floral Kingdom.

Table 6: Geographic profile of respondents

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Place of residence	Limpopo	28	8.75
	North – West	16	5
	Gauteng	58	18.13
	KwaZulu – Natal	34	10.63
	Free State	4	1.25
	Mpumalanga	18	5.63
	Western Cape	133	41.56
	Eastern Cape	19	5.94
	Northern Cape	7	2.19
Country of residence (if outside RSA)	Zimbabwe	1	0.31
	Malawi	1	0.31
	Kenya	1	0.31

Source: Compiled by author

Gauteng and the Western Cape proceeded to capture the biggest share of tourism income into South Africa. According to Heakal (2017), the majority of tourism products in the tourism database are located in the Western Cape (33%), Gauteng (20%) and KwaZulu-Natal (14%). Most respondents were from Gauteng and the Western Cape because most of the top attractions that attract tourists to South Africa are in those provinces, and tourist guides are required to guide tourists at those attractions. To summarise the profile of a South African tourist guide, Table 7 was constructed.

Table 7: Profile of a South African tourist guide

Description	Results
Gender	Male
Age	45 years
Home language	English
Ability to speak a foreign language	No
Areas of guiding specialisation	Cultural guiding
Highest level of education	Diploma/First degree
Years working as a tourist guide	More than 10 years
Gross annual income	R50 001−R150 000
Working days in a month	3 to 15 days a month
Average tour group size	8 or less
Place of residence	Western Cape
Country of Residence	South Africa

Source: Compiled by author

The tourist guides are mostly self-employed and employed or contracted by the tour operating companies on a daily basis. The tourist guide profile constructed above will enable tourism destinations and tourism employers such as tour operators and travel agencies to hire a suitable tourist guide with the right personality and qualifications to provide the best services to satisfy clients' needs.

Discussion

The literature reviewed clearly demonstrated that many researchers emphasise the importance of tour guides' roles such as interpreting and education, representation, leading, the provision of information, and mediation for building a good image of the sites where they guide tourists. In agreement with the literature, this research study's findings have shown the importance to tourist guides of knowing a foreign language. The primary objective of this paper is to obtain demographic, socioeconomic and geographic descriptions of tourist guides in South Africa.

Tourism companies should realise that not all tourist guides can meet the needs of all tourists visiting South Africa. Tour operators and travel agents cannot hire the same tourist

guides for all guided tours because not all tourist guides can guide visitors at all the different sites and destinations in a country. Tourist guides can only provide guided tours in the field for which they have been trained and licensed. It is thus advisable for tourism companies to hire tourist guides based on the needs of particular tourists so that they can receive the best service. Such an approach would ensure that tourism companies recognise the right tourist guides for specific guided tours.

Conclusions and recommendations

This study aimed to contribute to a better understanding of tourist guides by developing a profile. This information could help tourism companies to employ qualified tourist guides who meet the needs of both local and international tourists, such as language proficiency, as some tourists prefer to be guided in their own language. The results show that tourist guides are likely to be highly educated, are mainly male and do not speak a foreign language, and are hired based on their qualifications, including the licence to guide. Most of the respondents were middle-aged to old. This raises concerns about an undersupply of young entry-level tourist guides in the industry and a shortage of experienced professional guides. To attract young tourist guides, salary scales need to be increased so that they can make a living.

Training in speaking foreign languages should be made available to tourist guides immediately. It is recommended that tourist guide training courses should include a foreign language in the tourist guiding curriculum. The Department of Tourism should try to implement more training courses to train its staff, including tourist guides, in foreign languages based on the target markets to South Africa. Training in foreign languages such as Russian, Chinese, Mandarin and Portuguese would foster relations with the rest of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) nations.

The remuneration of tourist guides should be increased and their working conditions improved. Tourist guide representatives should meet with tourism stakeholders to set the basic salary of tourist guides according to their level of qualification and skills sets. Qualified local guides who are proficient in French, Portuguese, Mandarin, Spanish and Russian should be hired to serve the growing number of tourists from China and other countries who visit South Africa.

The main obstacle encountered during the study was the lack of a database of registered tourist guides to contact in order to obtain sufficient respondents. A sample size of at least 361 registered tourist guides of South Africa as representatives of the population size of 6 000 was anticipated to be used for the purpose of this research. However, only 320 completed questionnaires were used for data analysis, excluding 57 incomplete questionnaires. It was found that some of the respondents' contact details from the National Department of Tourism database were incorrect. Incomplete questionnaires were invalid and could not be utilised for this research. In addition, the time frame was extremely restricted, as the study had to be conducted between 15 August and 28 September 2018. Since the study focused mostly on South Africa, it is recommended that future studies focus on other geographical areas, for example, the whole of the Southern Africa region. Such a study would, therefore, explore how tourist guiding could be further developed at that scale. A possibility would be the feasibility of introducing a common Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) tourist guide academy for uniformity throughout the region.

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