



# Determining the roles of tourist guides which directly affect secondary teachers' satisfaction: A case of Maropeng and the Sterkfontein caves, South Africa

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## Abstract

Tourist guides are one of the crucial front-line professionals, information-givers and interpreters in the tourism industry. They occupy a special position within the tourism industry. The role performed by tourist guides can produce a quality service for visitors, and this is essential to the success of a destination, its reputation and its image. Through their knowledge and interpretation of an attraction and culture, and their interpersonal communication skills, they are able to transform the tourists' visit from a tour into an enjoyable experience. Without the service of tourist guides organised tourism is highly difficult for both the tour operators and tourist attraction managers. The opportunity of direct interaction with visitors makes guides responsible for projecting the correct image of a destination, communicating factually correct information about a destination, ensuring the safety and security of the visitors as well as pleasant and satisfying stay for them during their stay at tourism destinations. Therefore, the success of tourist attractions or destinations depends heavily on the performance of tourist guides. This paper aims to determine which roles of guides have direct impacts on secondary school teachers' satisfaction. This will be achieved by examining the role of tourist guides and its relation to secondary school teachers' satisfaction in a general sense. Data was collected through self-administered questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed among the secondary school teachers who participated in a guided school tour at Maropeng and/or the Sterkfontein Caves during the months of March and April 2016. Only 202 questionnaires were usable. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 21 was used to analyse the data. The Mann Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests were used to test for variance between distinct groups. In general, respondents were satisfied with the way in which guides performed their roles. Mann Whitney and Kruskal Wallis tests reveal that there are statistically significant differences between secondary teachers' demographic results and the dimensions of satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Tour-guiding, tourist guide role, tourist attractions, visitor satisfaction, South Africa tourism



## Introduction

Many people's first thought of a guided tour is a crowd of people following a woman with a yellow umbrella (Zillinger, Jonasson & Adolfsson, 2012:1); this is not always a positive image of this phenomenon. In line with this, Larsen and Meged (2013:88) point out that guided tours have been both stereotyped and ridiculed in everyday conversation and considered highly choreographed action. Today tourist guides are the essential mediators between a tourist attraction and its visitors. In other words, they are front-line personnel who are very much responsible for the overall satisfaction of the visitors. Although previous researchers have proposed an important linkage between tourist guide performance and tourist satisfaction (e.g. Geva & Goldman, 1991; Huang, Mossberg, 1995; Yu, Weiler & Ham, 2002; Zhang & Chow, 2004; Chang, 2006; Weiler & Assaker, 2014; Çetinkaya & Öter, 2016), this literature does not capture the intricacies of school tours.

Connell, Page and Meyer (2015:286) recognise that tourist attractions capitalise on school visits during the off peak season (Connell et al., 2015:286). However, in South Africa (SA) no study has been conducted to determine school teachers' satisfaction with guided school tours. Conversely, in Scandinavian countries, the guided school tour is an ongoing and developing research topic that has become important for academics, tourism attractions and school trip coordinators (Mykletun, 2013:269). This phenomenon has received limited attention in academic writing in South Africa. Many tourist attractions in SA offer guided school tours, including Maropeng (refer to image 1) and the Sterkfontein Caves (see image 2).



Image 1. Tumulus Building at Maropeng

Source: <http://localplaces.co.za/uncategorized/sterkfontein-caves-maropeng-cradle-of-humankind/>



**Image 2.** Secondary guided school tour at the Sterkfontein Caves Source: <https://www.wheretostay.co.za/topic/654-sterkfontein-caves>

Maropeng and the Sterkfontein Caves have United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site status. Both these sites are operated by the Maropeng á Afrika (PTY) Ltd. The study was conducted with a sample of secondary teachers who participated in a guided school tour/s at Maropeng and/or the Sterkfontein Caves during the months of March and April 2016.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows: First, a conceptual framework explaining the roles of tourist guides. Next, the methodology used to analyse the data is described. The findings of the study are then presented. The article concludes with a summary of the study's research contributions and recommendations for future research.

## **Literature review**

The National Department of Tourism (NDT) in SA state that "According to the Tourism Act (3/2014), tourist guide means any person registered as such under section 50 and who for reward accompanies any person who travels within the country or visits any place within the Republic and who furnishes such a person with information or comments". Weiler and Black (2014:3) define a tourist guide as "a professional who guides groups around venues or places of interest such as natural areas, historic buildings and sites and interprets the cultural and natural heritage in an inspiring and entertaining manner".

Although these two definitions differ, they both emphasise the 'guide/lead' and 'interpret/inform' roles of the tourist guide, which are respectively represented under the 'leadership sphere' and 'mediatory sphere' in the model of Cohen (1985) on the dynamics of the roles of tourist guides. Cohen (1985) first conceptualised the role of the guide in four distinct sub-roles of guiding, namely; instrumental roles, interactional roles, social role and communicative role. Tourist guides in these



roles must meet both the individual and the group needs of the party, using resources outside the group tour. The 'inner-directed' role of the tourist guide is focused on leadership in the form of social interaction (social role) and information dissemination (communicative role), and these needs are met from within the group. These roles of tourist guides are composed of a number of sub-roles, some of which may give rise to intra-role conflict (Ababneh, 2017:204). Based on Cohen's four roles of tourist guides, Sandaruwani and Gnanapala (2016:63) and Ababneh (2017:203) outline the following as roles and responsibilities of tourist guides; leadership, teacher-mediator, culture broker, ambassador, intermediary, buffer, actor, communication and resource management.

These roles clearly indicate that tourist guides are the front-line staff, and they can be responsible for the success or failure of the visitors' trip. The roles performed by tourist guides can produce a quality service for visitors, and this is essential to the success of the tourist attraction, its reputation and its image. Sandaruwani and Gnanapala (2016:63) assert that a skilful tourist guide is one of the most valuable assets for a visitor attraction. In many ways, the guide is the 'face' of the company. Many foreign visitors tend to view their tourist guides as representatives of the region or the country. Due to the importance of guides and the growth in heritage tourism, there is increasing interest in the roles of tourist guides.

In order for tourists guides to survive the competitive tourism market, Weiler and Black (2014:60) have identifies six mechanisms that may assist tourist guides in improving their performance, and these are professional associations, awards of excellence, training, professional certification, licensing and codes of conduct. The professional status of the tourist guide has undergone many changes in the last 35 years since the article by Cohen (1985) was published.

Many studies (Holloway, 1981; Cohen, 1985; Mykletun, 2013) have proved that tourist guides have a recognised professional status. Similarly, the Tourism Act (3/2014) confirms that in SA, most guides who currently lead tourists or visitors have completed formal courses offered by the Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Sector Education Training Authority's (CATHSSETA) accredited training providers. The professional status of tourist guides clearly distinguishes them from the tourists or visitors that they lead.

In SA, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) governs the qualifications for tourist guides. There are two qualifications registered on the NQF; National Certificate in Tourism: Guiding (NQF2) and National Certificate in Tourism: Guiding (NQF4). Additionally, in SA a tourist guide may not work without being registered. Moreover, any person who wishes to be registered as a tourist guide must apply to the relevant Provincial Registrar (Tourism Act, 3/2014). The Provincial Registrar issues badges and Identity cards (ID) to candidates only once their applications for registering as tourist guides have been approved. The ID card indicates the category of guiding, the region or regions for which the tourist guide is found competent to guide and specialties that the guide may possess. These ID cards are very important because the various policing authorities will request tourist guides to produce these during tourist guide spot checks conducted in various parts of SA to identify illegal/unregistered tourist guides.

The Tourism Act (3/2014) states that in all nine provinces of SA, registration as a tourist guide is valid for a period of three years from the date of issue of the registration certificate. Before the end of the registration period, tourist guides may apply to the relevant Provincial Registrar for renewal of their registration, and their registration shall be renewed upon submission of the relevant application forms and other documents and the payment of R240.



According to the requirements of the Tourism Act (3/2014), the National Registrar of Tourist Guides has developed a code of conduct and ethics with which every registered tourist guide must comply. All tourist guides are required to adhere to the code of conduct and ethics, and contravention is an offence that makes the tourist guide liable for prosecution in terms of the Tourism Second Amendment Act (70/2000). This code of conduct and ethics is crucial because it instructs tourist guides on how to perform their roles and responsibilities.

## Research methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach. Data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was benchmarked against similar studies undertaken in the Australia and elsewhere (Zhang & Chow, 2004; Weiler & Walker, 2014; Chang, 2014; Moscardo & Walker, 2014). There was therefore a considerable degree of confidence that the questionnaire's constructs were relatively stable. The first section of the questionnaire required the respondents to indicate demographic profile and the location of their school. On the second section of the questionnaire respondents were required to rate 16 variables on a five point Likert scale (1 represented very dissatisfied and 5 represented very satisfied). The total number of 202 questionnaires were usable. The respondents were required to rate roles of tourist guides. The SPSS Version 21 was used to analyse the data.

## Findings

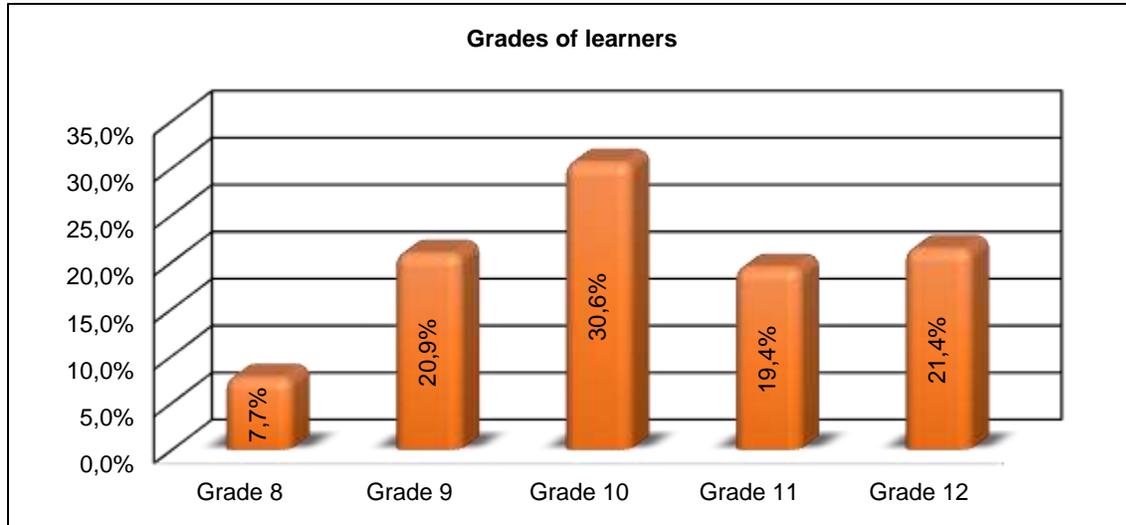
The aim of this study was to determine which roles of guides have direct impacts on secondary school teachers' satisfaction. For the purpose of this study, the Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficient has been calculated 0.937, which has been considered as highly reliable in social sciences (Özdmir, 2002:673). In order to ensure that questions in the questionnaire were clear, objective and easily understood by respondents, the questionnaire was piloted with ten experienced researchers within the tourism industry.

### *Descriptive results:*

The questionnaire comprised of two sections. The first section was designed to obtain demographic information of the respondents and their schools. The second section addressed the roles of the guide and respondents were required to rate 16 variables on a five point Likert scale (1 represented very dissatisfied and 5 represented very satisfied).

### *Demographic results:*

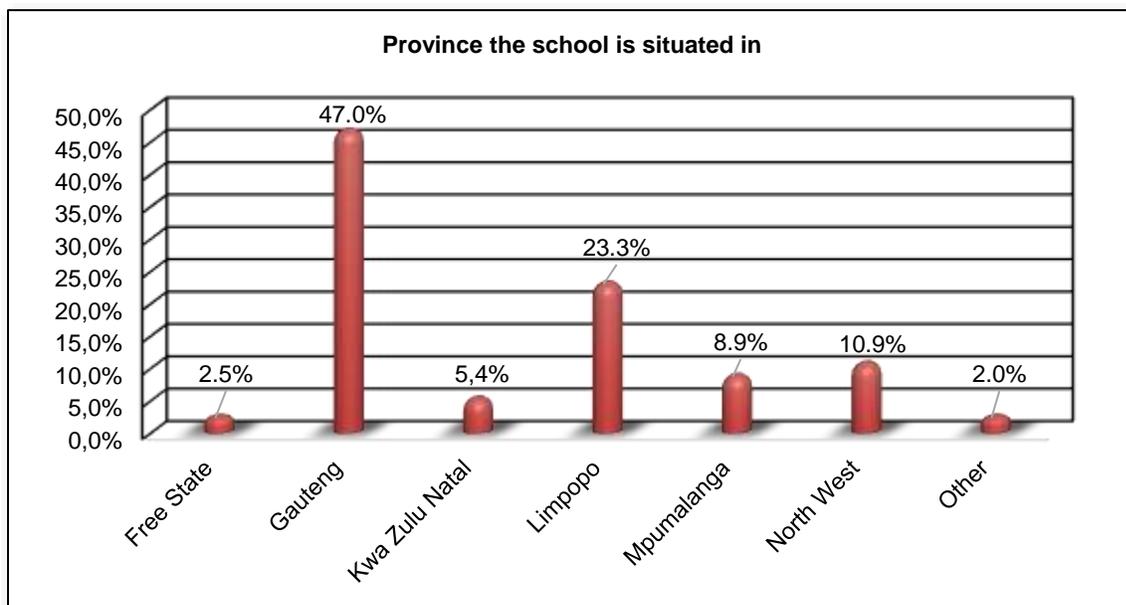
The results indicate that 49% (n=99) of the respondents were male and 51% (n=103) were female. More teachers between the ages of 45 and 54 years old accompanied school tours to Maropeng and the Sterkfontein Caves, with 29.7% (n=60) aged 35–44 years old and 20.8% (n=42) being 25–34 years old, 7.4% (n=15) were 18–24 years old and only one respondent (0.5%) was older than 65 years. The majority of respondents (88%, n=175) have either a degree or a diploma, and 12% (n=25) have a postgraduate degree. Figure 1 illustrates the grades of the learners that respondents are teaching at school and accompanying on the tour.



**Figure 1.** School grades of learners on the tour

Tourist guides should know the school grades of the learners prior to the tour so that they are able to modify the interpretation of the tour to meet the needs of different groups. These findings could be influenced by the fact that the Grade 10 to Grade 12 curriculums cover the content of the tours at Maropeng and the Sterkfontein Caves.

One third (33%, n=67) of the respondents' schools are situated in rural areas and two thirds (67%, n=133) of the schools are situated in urban areas. Figure 2 elucidates that nearly half 47% (n=95) of the schools that the respondents represent are situated in Gauteng, 23.3% (n=47) in Limpopo, 10.9% (n=22) in North West, 8.9% (n=18) in Mpumalanga, 5.4% (n=11) in KwaZulu Natal and 2.5% (n=5) are situated in the Free State. The category 'other' caters for respondents whose schools are not situated in South Africa.



**Figure 2.** Provinces in which the schools are situated



During the survey, there was a group of international school teachers that visited the sites for inspection. The category ‘other’ is represented by 2.0% (n=4) of respondents, and their schools are situated in countries such as France, Mozambique, Norway, Switzerland and the USA. Provinces such as the Western Cape, Eastern Cape and Northern Cape are not represented in this survey. Combined tours (both Maropeng and the Sterkfontein Caves) are represented by 74.3% (n=150) of the school teachers, whereas 16.8% (n=34) of respondents visited Maropeng only and 8.9% (n=18) of the respondents only visited the Sterkfontein Caves.

**Satisfaction levels on the roles of tourist guides:**

Table 1 indicates descriptive results regarding the roles of tourist guides.

**Table 1.** Overall average of satisfaction levels

Variables	Average level of satisfaction	Mean	Std. Deviation
Able to handle the group size	92.1%	4.39	.669
Able to solve problems	87%	4.29	.727
Always available to help	90.6%	4.36	.686
Appear neat and tidy	91.6%	4.40	.706
Communicate well in English	90%	4.41	.716
Generate friendly atmosphere	87%	4.36	.750
Good presentation skills	89.1%	4.36	.749
Honest and trustworthy	87%	4.29	.785
Inform visitors about safety regulations	86.1%	4.30	.760
Introduce shops & other facilities onsite	75.1%	4.04	.943
Knowledge of the attraction/s	90.7%	4.39	.757
Punctuality	93%	4.38	.683
Pay attention to detail	91.6%	4.40	.692
Respect towards visitors	93%	4.46	.692
Sense of humour	88.1%	4.29	.853
Well trained	94%	4.50	.680

These results indicate that most secondary school teachers were satisfied with the roles of tourist guides at Maropeng and the Sterkfontein Caves. ‘Well trained’ is rated highly. However, guides need to improve on this construct “introduce shops & other facilities onsite” in order to improve teachers’ satisfaction levels. Similarly, Zhang and Chow’s (2004:85-6) study revealed that the Mainland Chinese visitors who visited Hong Kong rated tourist guides’ roles (such as ‘punctuality’, ‘informing visitors about safety’), satisfactorily.

Weiler and Walker (2014:98) conducted a study at the Tonga Whale Guide Training Program and determined that the findings make it clear that if tourist guides lack knowledge of the attraction and fail to inform visitors of safety regulations, this will negatively affect the tour experience. The study of Chang (2014:219) confirms that tourist guides’ competent performances have a positive effect on perceived credibility trust, perceived benevolence trust and tourist satisfaction.

**Inferential results**

In order to find out whether there are statistically significant differences between secondary teachers’ demographic results and the dimensions of satisfaction, Mann Whitney and Kruskal Wallis tests have been run and the Table 2 reports the findings.



**Table 2.** The Mann Whitney for Gender

	Able to handle the group size.	Appear neat and tidy.	Generate friendly atmosphere.
Mann-Whitney U	5858.000	6055.500	5840.000
Z	2.189	2.725	2.269
Asymp. Sig. (2 tailed)	0.029	0.006	0.023
Effect size (r)	0.2	0.2	0.2
<b>Mean Rank</b>			
Male	92.83	90.83	92.01
Female	108.93	110.87	108.82

A Mann-Whitney U test was run to determine whether there were differences in satisfaction variables between the genders of secondary school teachers. Distributions of the satisfaction ratings for male secondary school teachers and female secondary school teachers were similar, as assessed by visual inspection. Mean rank scores were statistically significantly higher in female teachers than in male teachers. The satisfaction level of tourist guide was 'able to handle the group size'  $U = 5858$ ,  $z = 2.189$ ,  $p = 0.029$ ,  $r = 0.2$  was higher for female secondary school teachers (108.93) than for male secondary school teachers (92.83). The satisfaction level for tourist guide 'appear neat and tidy'  $U = 6055$ ,  $z = 2.725$ ,  $p = 0.006$ ,  $r = 0.2$  was higher for female secondary school teachers (110.87) than for male secondary school teachers (90.83). The satisfaction level for tourist guide 'generate friendly atmosphere'  $U = 5840$ ,  $z = 2.260$ ,  $p = 0.023$ ,  $r = 0.2$  was higher for female secondary school teachers (108.82) than for male secondary school teachers (92.01). The effect sizes for all three variables indicate a medium effect.

**Table 3.** Kruskal Wallis for Age group

	Good presentation skills
Chi-Square	13.381
Df	4
Asymp. Sig. (2 tailed)	.019
<b>Mean Rank</b>	
18-24 years	133.70
35-44 years	84.83

Distribution of satisfaction variable scores was not similar for all age groups, as assessed by visual inspection of a boxplot. Tourist guide have 'good presentation skills' scores were statistically significantly different between the age groups of secondary school teachers,  $X^2 = (4) = 13.381$ ,  $p = .019$ .

**Table 4.** Mann Whitney for Area in which the school is situated

	Generate friendly atmosphere.	Good presentation skills.	Honest and trustworthy.	Knowledge of the attraction/s.	Punctuality.	Sense of humour.
Mann-Whitney U	5103.000	5284.000	5234.000	5006.000	5232.500	5189.000
Z	2.069	2.599	2.639	2.825	2.632	2.308
Asymp. Sig. (2 tailed)	0.039	0.009	0.008	0.005	0.018	0.021
Effect size (r)	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
<b>Mean Rank</b>						
Rural	88.84	86.13	85.20	81.65	87.9	87.54
Urban	104.94	106.34	105.95	102.87	106.14	105.61



The differences in satisfaction variables between secondary teachers whose schools are situated in rural areas and secondary teachers whose schools are situated in urban areas revealed six statistically significant variables. Distributions of the satisfaction ratings for teachers whose schools are situated in rural areas and teachers whose schools are situated in urban areas were similar, as assessed by visual inspection. Mean rank scores were statistically significantly higher in teachers whose schools are situated in urban areas than in teachers whose schools are situated in rural areas. Tourist guide ‘generate friendly atmosphere’  $U = 5103$ ,  $z = 2.069$ ,  $p = 0.039$ ,  $r = 0.4$  was higher for teachers whose schools are situated in urban areas (104.94) than in teachers whose schools are situated in rural areas (88.84).

Tourist guide ‘presentation skills’  $U = 5284$ ,  $z = 2.599$ ,  $p = 0.009$ ,  $r = 0.2$  was higher for teachers whose schools are situated in urban areas (106.34) than in teachers whose schools are situated in rural areas (86.13). ‘Honest and trustworthy’  $U = 5234$ ,  $z = 2.639$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ,  $r = 0.2$  was higher for teachers whose schools are situated in urban areas (105.95) than in teachers whose schools are situated in rural areas (85.20). Tourist guide ‘knowledge of the attraction/s’  $U = 5006$ ,  $z = 2.825$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ,  $r = 0.2$  was higher for teachers whose schools are situated in urban areas (102.87) than in teachers whose schools are situated in rural areas (81.65). ‘Punctuality’  $U = 5232$ ,  $z = 2.632$ ,  $p = 0.018$ ,  $r = 0.2$  was higher for teachers whose schools are situated in urban areas (106.14) than in teachers whose schools are situated in rural areas (87.9). ‘Sense of humour’  $U = 5189$ ,  $z = 2.308$ ,  $p = 0.021$ ,  $r = 0.2$  was higher for teachers whose schools are situated in urban areas (105.61) than in teachers whose schools are situated in rural areas (87.54). The effect sizes for all six variables indicate a medium effect.

**Table 5.** Kruskal Wallis for Province in which the school is situated

	Knowledge of the attraction/s.
Chi-Square	17.294
Df	9
Asymp. Sig. (2 tailed)	.008
<b>Mean Rank</b>	
Gauteng	106.20
Other Provinces (Limpopo, North West, Free State, Kwa Zulu Natal, Limpopo)	126.00

Distribution of satisfaction variable scores was not similar for all groups, as assessed by visual inspection of a boxplot. ‘Knowledge of the attraction/s’ scores were statistically significantly different between the provinces in which teachers’ schools are situated,  $X^2(9) = 17.294$ ,  $p = .008$ .

**Table 6.** Kruskal Wallis for Site/s visited

	Able to solve problems.	Respect towards visitors.
Chi-Square	9.237	8.393
Df	2	2
Asymp. Sig. (2 tailed)	.010	.015
<b>Mean Rank</b>		
Both (Maropeng and Sterkfontein Caves)	94.59	94.88
Maropeng	125.36	119.00

Distribution of satisfaction variable scores was not similar for all groups, as assessed by visual inspection of a boxplot. ‘Able to solve problem’ scores were statistically significantly different between the site/s (Maropeng and/or Sterkfontein Caves) visited by teachers,  $X^2(2) = 9.237$ ,  $p = .010$ . ‘Respect towards visitors’ scores were statistically significantly different between the site/s (Maropeng and/or Sterkfontein Caves) visited by teachers,  $X^2(2) = 8.393$ ,  $p = .015$ .



## Discussions

It is observed that in a general sense, the level of satisfaction for 'the guide is able to handle the group size', 'the guide appears neat and tidy' and 'the guide generates friendly atmosphere' is higher for female teachers compared to the male teachers. Teachers aged between 18 and 24 years old are more satisfied with 'the guide generates friendly atmosphere' than those aged between 35 and 44 years old. Respondents who teach schools in urban areas are more satisfied with 'the guide generates friendly atmosphere', 'the guide has good presentation skills', 'the guide is honest and trustworthy', the guide's knowledge of the attraction/s', 'the guide's punctuality' and 'guide's sense of humour' than teachers who teach schools in rural areas. The results support the findings of the study by Zhang and Chow (2004:85-6) who determined that Mainland Chinese visitors who visited Hong Kong perceived the service of tourist guide satisfactory in the aspects of punctuality and informing visitors about safety. However, these visitors were dissatisfied with 'the guide's sense of humour'. Although these studies suggest that most visitors are satisfied with many aspects of the guided tour, skills of guides still need some development. Arslanturk and Altunoz's (2012) study found out that there are significant differences between the educational status and the satisfaction with the guide with regard to the four dimensions (communicative motivation, skills and knowledge, and perception of competence).

Teachers who participated on tours at both Maropeng and the Sterkfontein Caves are less satisfied with 'the guide is able to solve problems' and the guide has respect towards visitors' compared to teachers who participated only on a tour at Maropeng. This is ascribed to the fact that the more tours the participants take part in, the more difficult it is to satisfy them (Arslanturk & Altunoz, 2012:893). This yields some significant concerns both in sectoral terms and the lacking aspects in guide competence because study of Chang (2014:219) indicates that tourist guides' competent performance have a positive effect on perceived tourist satisfaction.

## Conclusion

Due to the importance of guides and the growth in tourism, there is increasing interest in the roles of tourist guides. According to Zillinger *et al.* (2012:2) and Alani, Khan and Manuel (2017:21), it is these 'moments of truth' that determine whether visitors are satisfied with a service. Agyeiwaah, Adongo, Dimache and Wondirad (2016:69) point out that it is important for tourist guides to ensure that visitors are satisfied with their service because satisfied visitors may become repeat visitors and provide word-of-mouth advertising to family, friends and colleagues. Ideally, this will translate into new visitors and an overall increase of tourism revenue for the community. It is important to realise that the results of this study were based on one target audience and therefore it limits the possibilities of generalising the findings. It is recommended for other researchers to conduct the study on different audiences, such as national and international tourists, and make a comparison of results between these groups.

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