

Competencies of the Tourism Management Students in Tour Guiding

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ABSTRACT

Tour guides are essential in enhancing tourist experiences by offering informative and engaging services. With the growing competition in the tourism industry, there is a rising demand for skilled tour guides possessing both technical and interpersonal skills. This study evaluates the competencies valued by tourism management students, who are future professionals in the field. By identifying key skills that contribute to tourist satisfaction and service quality, the research aims to guide curriculum development and improve training programs. The findings will support students' preparation for the industry, easing their transition into the workforce and boosting their contribution to tourism destinations' success.

The study uses a descriptive research design to evaluate the competencies of Tourism Management students in tour guiding. A survey questionnaire will be employed to gather data on students' conceptual, leadership, interpersonal, and administrative skills. The research aims to identify strengths and weaknesses, offering insights into students' readiness for the industry and providing recommendations for curriculum enhancements. The study involves 129 randomly selected students from a university in Santiago City, Isabela, and will employ statistical methods to analyze competency levels and demographic factors. Ethical standards, including confidentiality and informed consent, will be strictly maintained.

The results revealed that respondents were primarily 21-year-old, female first-year students. Their competencies in Leadership, Conceptual/Creative, Interpersonal, and Administrative domains were rated as moderately competent, with Leadership scoring the highest. Significant differences were found in competencies based on age, but not gender or year level. Recommendations include integrating decision-making, crisis management, problem-solving, and strategic planning skills into training programs. Future research should explore comparisons between institutions, the impact of external factors, additional competency areas, and the effect of teaching methods.

Keywords: Tour guides, Tourism Management, Competencies, Tour Guiding, Leadership, Interpersonal Skills, Curriculum Development, Training Programs, Student Readiness

INTRODUCTION

Tour guides are crucial intermediaries, facilitating the connection between travelers and their chosen destinations. As tourism becomes increasingly competitive, tour guides go beyond simply providing facts; they create memorable experiences that satisfy visitors. Tour guides must provide timely, relevant, intangible, and inseparable services. Their professional skills are considered a key aspect of the travel experience, as they can shape tourists' perceptions of service quality, enhancing overall satisfaction. In today's highly competitive tourism industry, tour guides are essential human assets for travel businesses aiming to succeed.

Effective tour guides possess a unique combination of hard skills, such as in-depth knowledge of historical, cultural, and natural sites, and soft skills, including communication, adaptability, and problem-solving. These professionals are crucial in protecting tourists' rights while delivering seamless, intangible services that enhance the travel experience. The perceived quality of these services directly impacts tourists' overall satisfaction and lasting impressions of a destination. (Kul et al., 2024)

Despite growing recognition of tour guides' importance to travel businesses' success, limited research exists on the specific skills tour guides value most. This knowledge gap makes it difficult for training programs to align with the evolving expectations of the industry and the professionals involved.

This study aims to assess the importance of various tour guiding skills from the perspective of tourism management students, representing the future industry professionals. By examining their views, we seek to identify key competencies that enhance tourist experiences and contribute to higher satisfaction levels.

This study is significant for tourism students to know what skills they already have. Knowing which competencies are valued in the industry, they can be eager to take steps to improve or focus on areas that need growth. It can also inspire them, make them self-aware, and motivate them to seek professional development opportunities that will help them have a smooth transition to the workplace in the future. As for the universities and tourism schools, it can help them to assess the current curriculum and their teaching method in such a way as to highlight the areas where students may need further support and training, particularly in practical competencies like tour guiding.

Understanding which skills are most valued in the field can inform the development of targeted training programs and better prepare guides to meet industry demands. Moreover, this research provides insights into how tour guides can significantly shape tourists' perceptions of service quality, thus fostering greater satisfaction and contributing to the overall success of tourism destinations.

This research is conducted to evaluate the competencies of tourism students in tour guiding to understand their readiness for the industry better. Identifying strengths and areas that need improvement guarantees that students are well-prepared for the demands of professional tour guides and can meet the expectations of the tourism industry with the right skills and abilities to succeed as experienced tour guides and be more prepared for the real world. Identifying strengths and areas that need improvement guarantees that students are well-prepared for the demands of professional tour guides and can meet the expectations of the tourism industry with the right skills and abilities to succeed as professional tour guides, ensuring them to be more prepared for the real world.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The significance of tour guides in the tourism industry cannot be exaggerated, as they play a crucial role in enhancing visitors' experiences. In recent years, the increasing complexity of global travel has necessitated a deeper exploration of the competencies that effective tour guides must possess. Tourism is a significant driver of economic growth in many regions, particularly those rich in cultural and historical heritage, and understanding the essential skills that tour guides need is vital for both professional success and enhancing service delivery standards.

The competencies of a tour guide are essential in providing tourists with high-quality services, which are needed for success in different industries, particularly tour guiding. According to Kapa et al., (2022), tour guides who provide high-quality services to tourists ensure that they are satisfied, and as a result, they may be willing to pay more and stay longer at a destination. This may encourage tourists to pay more and extend their stay at a destination. This highlights the importance of identifying the key competencies that will help the tour guides deliver excellent services. According to Smith (2020), the quality of service provided by tourist guides is a pivotal factor that can greatly influence tourists' overall experience. It is, therefore, essential to understand the skills that impact service quality among tourist guides. Assessing the competencies of Tourism Management students in tour guiding provides essential information on how prepared they are for the field. It also helps determine how the University teaches the skills required for tour guiding. This assessment form may guide program changes, guaranteeing that students have the necessary skills for successful employment in the tourism industry, particularly tour guiding.

Much of the existing work focuses on broad aspects of hospitality or large, urban settings, with few studies emphasizing the unique demands and skills required of tour guides, especially in regional or cultural contexts. (Kul et al., 2024) According to Mungai et al., (2021), it fails to adequately explore whether educational

training aligns with the evolving demands of the tourism industry, potentially leaving graduates underprepared for professional roles. As industry expectations shift due to technological advancements and changing consumer behavior, research has not kept pace with how educational institutions adapt to these trends. Addressing these gaps is essential to ensure that tourism graduates are equipped to meet the challenges of a dynamic and evolving industry.

Exploring the competencies essential for tourism management students, particularly in the realm of tour guiding, has garnered increasing attention in recent years. Piróg et al., (2021) make a pivotal contribution to this discourse, delving into the self-assessment of competencies among tourism degree graduates in Poland and their implications for successful transitions into the workforce. Research conducted by Verdadero et al., (2020) assessed the preparedness of tourism students to enter the industry, evaluating their concentration area skills, generic skills, and functional area skills. The study found that students' preparedness varied significantly, highlighting the need for further investigation into their competencies.

Understanding these dynamics is essential for improving educational practices and ensuring that graduates are equipped to meet the challenges of the evolving tourism landscape. (Philips, 2024) The main objective of this study is to assess the perceived importance of various tour guiding skills from the perspective of tourism management students, representing future professionals in the industry. It aims to identify the key hard and soft skills these students value in tour guiding, examine how these skills enhance tourists' experiences and overall satisfaction, and determine their role in shaping tourists' perceptions of service quality. Additionally, the study seeks to provide insights for developing targeted training programs to better prepare tour guides to meet industry demands and assess the potential impact of skilled tour guides on the success of tourism destinations.

This study will examine the competencies viewed as essential by future tour guides and provide invaluable insights into the effectiveness of tourism management programs. The findings will help educational institutions like the University refine their curricula to ensure that graduates are well-prepared for the workforce and capable of delivering exceptional service in the increasingly competitive tourism industry.

Research Question

1. What is the profile of respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 Age
 - 1.2 Sex
 - 1.3 Year Level
2. What is the level of competencies of the respondents in terms of:
 - 2.1 Conceptual/Creative Domain
 - 2.2 Leadership Domain
 - 2.3 Interpersonal Domain
 - 2.4 Administrative Domain
3. Is there any significant difference between the level of competencies in tour guiding with the demographic profile of the respondents?
4. What measures can be proposed to enhance the skills of the respondents?

Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between the competencies of tourism management in tour guiding.

Significance of the Study

This study is designed to offer valuable insights into the competencies needed for effective tour guiding, particularly for tourism students. The findings are expected to be useful to a range of people, including:

Tourism Students. This research will help tourism students understand the essential skills needed to succeed as tour guides. It will act as a roadmap, giving them practical knowledge to boost their confidence as they transition from school to the professional world.

Future Researchers. This study can be a helpful reference for those looking to explore this field further. It sheds light on essential competencies in tour guiding, providing a solid starting point for anyone interested in diving deeper into tourism education or related research.

Educational Institutions and Curriculum Developers. The insights from this study can help schools and universities refine their tourism programs. By pinpointing the key skills needed in tour guiding, educators can ensure students are getting the training that sets them up for success in the real world.

Tourism Industry Stakeholders. This study also benefits employers in the tourism sector by highlighting the skills that matter most in the industry. By aligning academic training with what employers actually need, it can help create stronger ties between educational institutions and the tourism industry.

Current Tour Guides. This research can benefit even professionals already working in the field. It highlights the importance of key skills like customer service, communication, and cultural awareness, encouraging ongoing learning and professional growth.

Tourism Destinations. Tour guides are often the face of a destination, shaping how visitors perceive it. This research emphasizes the importance of training guides who can represent their locations well, ultimately helping improve visitor experiences and encouraging more responsible, sustainable tourism.

Theoretical Background

Theoretical Framework

This study is premised on the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) developed by Kolb (1984). This highlights and explores how students acquire and develop practical competencies in this field.

The process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience is how Experiential Learning Theory defines learning. The combination of grasping and altering experience produces knowledge (Kolb, 1984). An idealized learning cycle or spiral is used to describe this process, in which the student "touches all the bases" by experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting in a recursive manner that is sensitive to the learning environment and the material being covered. Observations and reflections are based on immediate or actual experiences.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) is relevant to the present study, as it provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how students acquire and refine the skills required for effective tour guiding. Experiential Learning Theory highlights the crucial role that experience plays in learning, particularly applicable in a practical, hands-on field like tourism management. Tour guiding demands a variety of skills, including communication, cultural sensitivity, leadership, and adaptability, all of which are best learned through active engagement in real-world scenarios. Kolb's theory offers a structured approach to developing these skills through experience, reflection, and application cycles. In the context of tourism, students often participate in internships, simulations, and actual tour guiding as part of their curriculum.

Conceptual Framework

The Input-Process-Output (IPO) method was used because it is the most suitable format for analyzing the development of competencies among Tourism Management students in tour guiding. The first box represents the Input, which includes the variables that will inform the assessment, beginning with the respondents' profiles, such as age, sex, and year level. These inputs are aligned with the different competency domains, including conceptual/creative, leadership, interpersonal, and administrative.

An arrow points to the second box, representing the Process. This phase involves collecting data through a

survey questionnaire to assess the participants' competencies. The outputs aim to identify areas for improvement and propose measures to enhance the participants' skills based on the collected data. These results will provide valuable insights for improving the curriculum and supporting the professional development of future tour guides. The feedback loop, represented by arrows from outputs back to inputs, ensures the plan is constantly updated based on new information and community needs, making it adaptable and responsive to change.

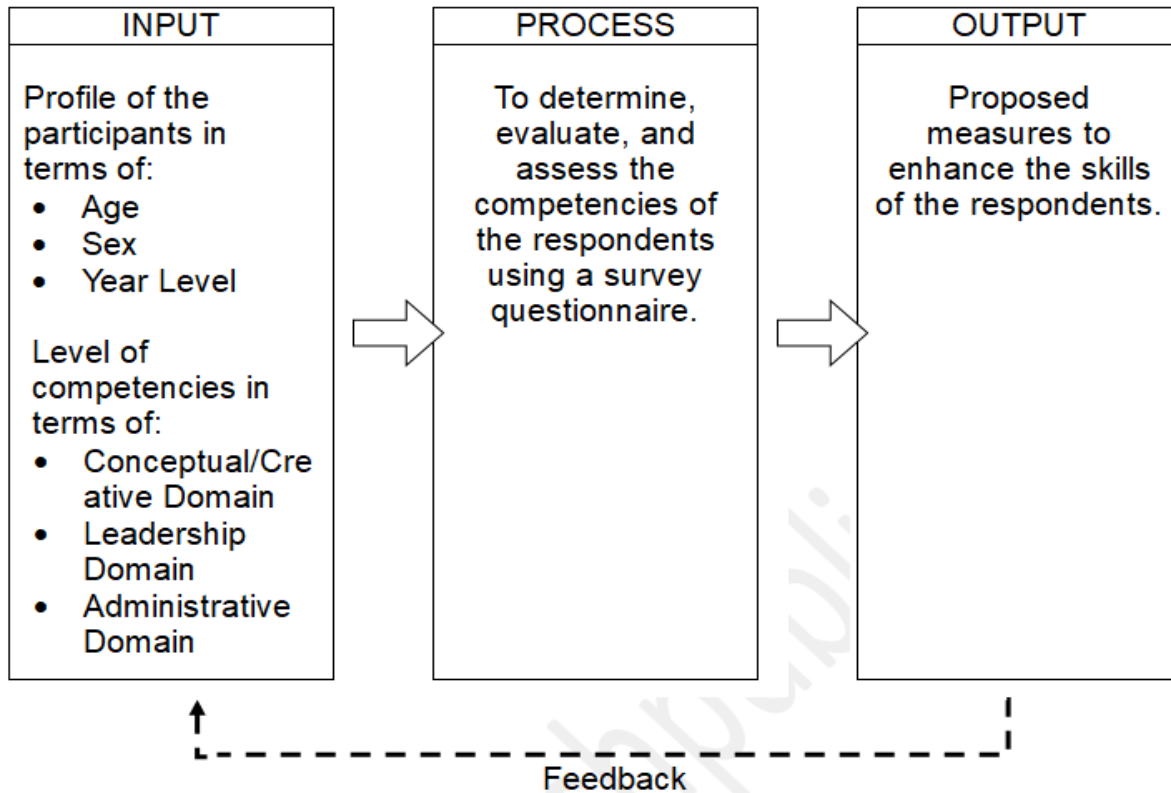


Figure 1. The Research Paradigm

LITERATURE REVIEW

A tour guide is granted a professional certificate and appointed by a tour operator or travel agency, agreeing to accompany the activities of tourists or tour groups in accordance with a specific tour program (Rini & Fidaus, 2022).

One of the key components of tourism is the tour guide, who leads and arranges visits for groups of tourists. He clarifies and explains the tourist attractions to the individuals in the group he accompanies, and it is his accountability to maintain this group. Moreover, he is the ambassador, messenger, and teacher who expresses the civilization and culture of the country (Muhammad, 2024).

Bagon et al. (2023) said that these competencies and skills must be considered and assessed because they mainly impact the performance of every Hospitality and Tourism Management student in the company or establishment they will work with. Moreover, the students' preparedness as new service providers in the tourism sector can also be analyzed. Developing and nurturing significant competencies and skills leads to better career and job satisfaction.

According to Kassawneh et al., (2019), Tour guiding is one of the concepts that have become more deeply rooted in the tourism industry. This is due to the interest in tourist destinations in guiding and considering it essential to deepen the tourists' knowledge of the places they visit. In addition to that, the tour guiding profession is one of the most important professions because of its huge repercussions on the path of a tourist's trip, and the consequences of this result may be positive and may also be negative, and this is related to the tour guide's performance.

Explore the skill sets perceived by tourist guides as the most important in their professional practice to create a memorable tourist experience to ensure that skills perceived to be most important are considered during the guiding training course for present and future tourist guides to prepare them for both employment, long-life learning and enhance their performance to attain the highest level of customer satisfaction (Kapa et al., 2022).

A tour guide or tourist guide assists and informs clients about cultural, historical, and modern heritage at educational institutions, religious and historical sites such as museums, and various tourist attraction resorts. Tourist guides can further their education by learning new languages and broadening their guiding languages to lead foreign tourists (Juni & Hutasuhut 2023).

According to Juni & Hutasuhut (2024), tourist guides are among the most critical human resources in the tourism industry, and they play a vital role in the success of travel agencies. To acquire a competitive edge in today's highly competitive market, firms need to provide innovative services and high-quality products. Tour guides also need to develop their professional skills in order to enhance the satisfaction of tourists. Effective communication is paramount in guiding, as it ensures that information is accurately conveyed and understood by tourists from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Knowledgeable guides who are well-versed in the area's history, culture, and geography can provide enriching and insightful experiences that elevate the tourist experience.

Tour guides' communication skills refer to the ability to explain the roles and relationships of something, such as tourist attractions, historical backgrounds, or general stories, while publicizing an organization at the same time. Important topics for their communication skills include appropriate vocabulary and idiom usage, using grammar correctly based on the story, using correct word order and conjunction, clear pronunciation of words and sentences, intonation in the presentation, punctuation in the storytelling, fluent storytelling, and using an appropriate language level with the foreign tourists. This is considered an obstacle for tour guides, so it is essential to quickly develop their communication skills, especially in the English language, to become professional, which can help build reliability for the organization (Chanwanakul, 2021). The professional competencies of tour guides can be considered as part of the travel product, as their competencies can influence visitors' views on a tour guide's service quality and improve tourist satisfaction (Lin, Lin, and Chen, 2017). Tour guides' competence is not limited to their verbal strength but has exceeded the limits of exceptional guardedness skills (Suryana 2022).

The skills needed for any job, especially in customer service domains, can be divided into hard skills—specific to a certain job (also called technical expertise)—and soft skills or interpersonal skills that help any employee better relate to their employers, colleagues, and customers, regardless of the professional domain (also called transferable skills) (Mihele & Bolog 2023).

The tour leader's leadership style is a result of his/her accumulated on-the-job experience. Different leadership styles may bring different results, and tourists may even experience the same group tour product very differently depending on the way it is led, with good results fostering customer satisfaction and loyalty and bad results generating disputes (Tsuar & Teng 2017).

Interpersonal communication is one of the communication skills that must be possessed by tour guides to guide tourists so that communication can run well and effectively. Interpersonal communication goes well when there is reciprocity, taking turns in receiving information between communicators and communicants alternately to create a dialogic atmosphere that makes the guide as well as tourists more open in the delivery of current information guidance in the field, which, of course, will accept one another (Susilo & Nurdawati, 2024). Interpersonal competence is crucial in the process of human growth. The importance of interaction with others begins with family members at an early age and continues with friends and teachers in schools and later with members of professional workplaces. Interpersonal competence is, therefore, an essential part of relationships with others and social activities (Han & Son, 2020).

Tour guides are one of the key front-line players in the tourism industry. Through their knowledge and interpretation of a destination's attractions and culture, as well as their communication and service skills, they have the ability to transform the tourists' visit from a tour into an experience (Abiew & Abuhay, 2024)

The duties of tour guides also include managing activities related to visitors' satisfaction, starting from their arrival point until the day that the visitor departs. Guides have difficult duties, such as offering the best services to the visitors, to make them feel satisfied and remind them to come back to the destination not alone, but also by inviting friends, families, or colleagues as proof that they are really satisfied and impressed with the destination they visited (Francisa & Wandakab, 2021).

The most crucial skills competencies in the industry are customer service, communication skills, willingness to take responsibility, ability to work under pressure, time management, and determination skills (Esperanzate et al., 2024).

Tour guides should reinforce service quality to tourists, quality, and service competencies in order to demonstrate their friendliness. Through tour guides' positive service attitude and service efficiency, their customers (i.e., tourists) will perceive high-quality service content that can enhance tourist satisfaction considerably (Mohammed, 2022).

Administrative competence refers to the capacity of the school's administrators to organize, direct, coordinate, and plan the use of all the resources at their disposal to meet the school's needs. A school principal or administrator demonstrates competence in various ways, including leadership, communication, and supervision (Owan & Agunwa, 2019).

METHODS

Research Design

This study will employ a descriptive research design, which is appropriate as it seeks to provide detailed information about the competencies of tourism management students. The descriptive design is well-suited for this research because it allows the researcher to access participants directly and gather valuable insights into their views, opinions, and experiences on the subject matter (Siedleck, 2020).

According to McCombes (2023), Descriptive research design focuses on accurately and systematically describing a population, situation, or phenomenon. It addresses questions such as what, where, when, and how, but does not attempt to explain why something occurs. This design can utilize various research methods to investigate one or more variables, with the researcher observing and measuring them rather than manipulating or controlling them, as would be done in experimental research. Descriptive research is beneficial when the goal is to identify characteristics, frequencies, trends, or categories, making it a suitable choice when there is limited information on the topic. It provides foundational insights into how, when, and where something happens, which can serve as a basis for further research to understand why it happens.

The study aims to evaluate the competencies of tourism management students, particularly in tour guiding, for the tourism industry. Through this design, the research will describe and analyze the students' competencies in tour guiding, providing a clear picture of their abilities in various aspects of the field. Additionally, it will help identify their strengths and weaknesses, offering a comprehensive understanding of their preparedness.

Data will be collected through an online questionnaire targeting tourism management students, including multiple-choice and Likert scale items. The online format is chosen because it simplifies participants' response process, ensures their responses' privacy, and facilitates systematic data analysis. This method is suitable for obtaining the necessary information on the most important competencies in tour guiding.

Study Site and Participants

The researchers would be conducting the study at the University located in Santiago City, Isabela, Philippines. The University is well-known for its Tourism Management program, which offers students both theoretical and practical training in various aspects of tourism, including tour guiding. The University was chosen because it strongly emphasizes preparing students for careers in tourism, offering a curriculum that integrates tour guiding as a core subject. This makes it an ideal institution for assessing the competencies of students who have completed this essential area of study, as it ensures students have received targeted training relevant to the

tourism industry.

The study participants were students of all levels in the Tourism Management program. This focused approach ensures that the study accurately assesses students who have received the foundational knowledge and practice required for tour guiding.

The study population consisted of 193 Tourism Management students, with 72 from the 1st year, 40 from the 2nd year, 40 from the 3rd year, and 41 from the 4th year. Their practical and academic experiences in tour guiding make them a suitable population for this research, as the study aims to determine how well the program has equipped them with the necessary skills to perform in real-world tour guiding scenarios.

Population, Sampling Size, and Sampling Techniques

The study will be conducted at the University, and the target population will consist of 193 students enrolled in the tourism program. Participants had to be currently enrolled in the program to be eligible for the study. No specific exclusion criteria were applied, allowing any student meeting these basic requirements to participate.

Demographically, the population represents a mix of students in their final stages of academic training in tourism management. The majority are expected to have already acquired foundational knowledge and practical skills in tourism-related fields, making them suitable candidates for assessing competencies in tour guiding.

A simple random sampling method was employed to ensure an unbiased selection of participants. Using the RAOSOFT calculator with a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level, a sample size of 129 students was determined. This sample was drawn randomly from the total population of 193 eligible students, ensuring that every student had an equal opportunity to be selected for the study. This approach was chosen to ensure the reliability and representativeness of the data while recognizing that not all students could be included in the sample.

Instruments

This study is a survey questionnaire designed to assess the competencies of the Tourism Management students in tour guiding at the University. This questionnaire will be administered to a total of 193 respondents, consisting of 72 from the first-year, 40 from the second-year, 40 from the third-year, and 41 from the fourth-year Tourism Management students, and will be distributed in person. The questionnaire was adapted and pilot-tested on the HTM students of Cebu Roosevelt Memorial Colleges. The reliability and internal consistency of the device were assessed using Cronbach's Alpha by Bagon, Samillano, & Tinapay, (2023).

The first part of the instrument focuses on the demographic profile of the Tourism Management students. This section helps provide context for the study, as these factors may influence the respondents' competencies in tour guiding.

The first part focuses on the demographic profile of the respondents, including their name, age, sex, and year level. These questions are answered through a fill-in-the-blank format. The second part measures the level of tour guiding competencies of the respondents using a four-point Likert scale with choices from 1 – Strongly Disagree to 4 – Strongly Agree. This section is divided into four parts: the conceptual/creative domain, the leadership domain, the interpersonal domain, and the administrative domain. Each domain contains statements that assess how confident and skilled the respondents are in each area. The third inquiry is the analysis question; this section aims to determine if there is a significant difference between the competencies of the respondents and their demographic profiles. Lastly, open-ended questions: This section seeks to gather suggestions on what measures need to be implemented to enhance the skills of the respondents.

Data Gathering Procedure

To facilitate the data-gathering process, the researcher undertook the following procedures:

- The first steps in the research process were brainstorming, choosing a title, getting approval, and writing the introduction and background.
- A literature analysis was then conducted to support and improve these sections.
- Data collection and analysis will follow the development of a survey questionnaire.
- The researchers will get participants' legal agreement before sending out the questionnaire by outlining the goal of the study, their rights, and how the data will be used. Their voluntary involvement will be verified by written or electronic permission.
- The university's Tourism students will be personally given printed survey questionnaires. To guarantee proper answers, researchers will define any words, encouraging participants to give careful thought to their answers.
- The survey will be conducted according to the participants' available time to ensure everyone can answer it completely.
- Anonymity and confidentiality will be strictly maintained; data will be anonymized, securely stored, and analyzed in aggregate to protect participants' identities.

Data Analysis

The following statistical tools and methods will be utilized in this study to give meaning to the data gathered.

1. Frequency and Percentage were used to count the number of responses for each variable, summarizing how often specific competencies are self-assessed by participants.
2. Weighted Mean was utilized to determine the average level of respondents' self-assessed competencies in tour guiding based on their responses.
3. The Kruskal-Wallis H test and Dunn's pairwise test were used to compare the self-assessed competencies of respondents across different age groups and determine if there were significant differences.

The participants' perceptions were interpreted according to scales using range and interpretation of the competencies in tour guiding as shown in the table below:

Scale	Range	Scale Level	Qualitative Interpretation
4	3.25 – 4.00	Strongly Agree	Highly Competent
3	2.50 – 3.24	Agree	Moderately Competent
2	1.75 – 2.49	Disagree	Low Competent
1	1.00 – 1.74	Strongly Disagree	Not Competent

Ethical Consideration

This study aims to assess the competencies of Tourism Management students in tour guiding, providing benefits such as increased self-awareness and insights into areas for growth. It will also help the University improve its curriculum, better prepare students for industry demands, and equip participants with valuable feedback on their readiness for professional roles.

While minor risks exist, such as privacy concerns and potential discomfort during self-assessment, these will be addressed through informed consent, confidentiality, and carefully designed, non-intrusive questions. Overall, the benefits of this research, including enhanced student development and curriculum improvements, outweigh the manageable risks.

RESULTS

This section presents the results of the data gathered using a survey questionnaire and the appropriate statistical tools necessary to compute accurately from the data gathered and presented in a tabular format.

Part I – Profile of the Respondents

Table 1. Distribution of Demographic Profile of the Respondents.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18 Years Old	39	24
19 Years Old	33	21
20 Years Old	32	20
21 Years Old	42	26
22 Years Old	12	7
23 Years Old	3	2
Sex		
Female	128	80
Male	33	20
Year Level		
1 st Year Level	56	35
2 nd Year Level	37	23
3 rd Year Level	36	22
4 th Year Level	32	20

As gleaned on Table 1 with regard to age, 42 or 26 percent were 21 years old, 39 or 24 percent were 18 years old, 33 or 21 percent were 19 years old, 32 or 20 percent were 20 years old, 12 or 7 percent were 22 years old, and 3 or 2 percent were 23 years old. It implies that the majority of the respondents belong to 21 years old. Meanwhile, 128 or 80 percent were female, while 33 or 20 percent were male. It implies that the majority of the respondents were female.

The respondent were enrolled as 1st year level with a frequency of 56 or 35 percent, 37 or 23 percent were 2nd year level, 36 or 22 percent were 3rd year level, and the rest of the respondents were the 4th year level with a frequency of 32 or 20 percent. It implies that the majority of respondents were the 1st year level.

Part II – Tour Guiding Competencies

This section shows the result of the tour guiding competencies of the respondent on the Conceptual/Creative Domain, Leadership Domain, Interpersonal Domain, and Administrative Domain.

Conceptual/Creative Domain

Table 2. Mean Responses of the Respondents in their competencies in tour guiding with regard to the Conceptual/Creative Domain.

Indicator	SD	Mean	Scale Label	Qualitative Interpretation
1. I understand the general concept of the tourism industry.	0.64	3.16	A	Moderately

2. I develop a personal perspective such as exploring belief, argument and theories.	0.61	2.84	A	Competent
3. I expect to face the challenges in the hands-on experience of the tourism industry.	0.86	2.85	A	
4. I am able to make decision because of the data I have.	0.68	2.64	A	
5. I am able to identify and improve processes important to the industry.	0.64	2.78	A	
Category Mean		2.85	A	Moderately Competent

Legend: 1.00-1.74- Strongly Disagree (DS) 2.50-3.24- Agree (A) 1.75-2.49- Disagree (D) 3.25-4.00- Strongly Agree (SA)

As presented on Table 2, with regards to tour guiding competencies about Conceptual/Creative Domain they believe that they are moderately competent in their skills showing on the different indicators, that they understand the general concept of the tourism industry (M=3.16), they expect to face the challenges in the hands-on experience of the tourism industry (M=2.85), even they develop a personal perspective such as exploring belief, argument and theories (M=2.84), likewise with they able to identify and improve processes important to the industry (M=2.78), and they able to make decision because of the data they have (M=2.64). It implies that majority of the respondents are agreeing in their Conceptual/Creative Domain or they are moderately competent with a Category Mean of 2.85. It means that the respondents were knowledgeable but still need further development in areas that require critical thinking, creativity, and decision-making.

Leadership Domain

Table 3. Mean Responses of the Respondents in their competencies in tour guiding with regard to the Leadership Domain.

Indicator	STD	Mean	Scale Label	Qualitative Interpretation
1. I operate effectively and calmly under pressure or in a crisis situation.	0.60	2.73	A	Moderately Competent
2. I always maintain professional and ethical standards in the work environment.	0.56	2.86	A	
3. I make sure to demonstrate professional appearance and poise.	0.64	2.89	A	
4. I strive to achieve positive working relations with people based on perception of work interaction.	0.63	2.90	A	
5. I go beyond self-interest for the good of the organization.	0.65	2.87	A	
Category Mean		2.85		Moderately Competent

Legend: 1.00-1.74- Strongly Disagree (DS) 2.50-3.24- Agree (A) 1.75-2.49- Disagree (D) 3.25-4.00- Strongly Agree (SA)

As shown on Table 3, regarding to tour guiding competencies in the Leadership Domain, the respondents perceive themselves as moderately competent across various indicators. They strive to achieve positive working relations with people based on perception of work interaction (M=2.90). They go beyond self-interest for the good of the organization (M=2.89), even they operate effectively and calmly under pressure or in a crisis

situation (M=2.87) as well as maintain professional and ethical standard in the work environment (M=2.86) and they operate effectively and calmly under pressure or in a crisis situation (M=2.73). The category means of 2.85 implies that the majority of respondents are agreeing in their Leadership Domain. This indicates that while they demonstrate essential leadership qualities, there is still room for improvement in fully developing their leadership potential.

Interpersonal Domain

Table 4. Mean Responses of the Respondents in their competencies in tour guiding with regard to the Interpersonal Domain.

Indicator	STD	Mean	Scale Label	Qualitative Interpretation
1. I am willing to work with teams or groups.	0.73	3.02	A	Moderately Competent
2. I work well with people from culturally diverse backgrounds.	0.65	2.85	A	
3. I believe I can serve people enthusiastically in the hospitality and tourism industry.	0.71	2.88	A	
4. I am good in conflict management and glad to talk about issues and problems with other people.	0.71	2.81	A	
5. I listen to other people's opinion and suggestion and open to new ideas.	0.79	3.01	A	
Category Mean		2.91	A	Moderately Competent

Legend: 1.00-1.74- Strongly Disagree (DS) 2.50-3.24- Agree (A) 1.75-2.49- Disagree (D) 3.25-4.00- Strongly Agree (SA)

As gleaned on Table 4, regarding tour guiding competencies in the Interpersonal Domain, the respondents consider themselves moderately competent across the various indicators. They are most willing to work with teams or groups (M=3.02) and listen to other people's opinion and suggestion and open to new ideas (M=3.01). They also believe they can serve people with enthusiasm in the tourism industry (M=2.88) and interact well with individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds (M=2.85). Additionally, they demonstrate competence in handling conflicts and discussing issues (M=2.81). It implies that majority of the respondents are agreeing in their Interpersonal Domain or they are moderately competent with a Category Mean of 2.91. The results indicate that even though the respondents have key interpersonal skills, they still require further education and exposure to practical tour guiding experiences in order to improve their competence and confidence. While they are able to communicate with people and handle a variety of social circumstances, they might still need additional hands-on experience, education, and real-world applications to improve their skills and deliver better results in their tour guiding circumstances.

Administrative Domain

Table 5. Mean Responses of the Respondents in their competencies in tour guiding with regard to the Administrative Domain.

Indicator	STD	Mean	Scale Label	Qualitative Interpretation
1. I prefer to keep the work group focused on key priorities.	0.67	2.86	A	Moderately Competent
2. I often translate strategic goals into specific tactics.	0.68	2.82	A	
3. I identify action steps needed to complete a project.	0.70	2.82	A	

4. I prefer to coordinate planning efforts with other work groups.	0.68	2.84	A	Moderately Competent
5. I always use all resources to get the best result for the situation.	0.76	2.91	A	
Category Mean		2.85	A	

Legend: 1.00-1.74- Strongly Disagree (DS) 2.50-3.24- Agree (A) 1.75-2.49- Disagree (D) 3.25-4.00- Strongly Agree (SA)

As presented in Table 5, regarding tour guiding competencies in the Administrative Domain, the respondents believe that their skills were moderately competent, as indicated by the different indicators. They always use all resources to get the best result for the situation (M=2.91) and keep the work group focused on key priorities (M=2.86), which they also prefer to coordinate planning efforts with other work groups (M=2.84). The lowest mean scores often translate strategic goals into specific tactics (M=2.82) to identify action steps needed to complete a project (M=2.82). The category means of 2.85 implies that the majority of respondents are agreeing in their Administrative Domain with a category mean of 2.85. It shows that their administrative domain is satisfactory but could benefit from further development to achieve higher efficiency, effectiveness, or skill levels.

Table 6. Summary of the tour guiding competencies of the respondents.

Tour Guiding Competencies	Mean	Scale Label	Qualitative Interpretation
Conceptual/Creative Domain	2.85	A	Moderately Competent
Leadership Domain	2.91	A	
Interpersonal Domain	2.85	A	
Administrative Domain	2.85	A	
Overall Mean	2.87	A	Moderately Competent

Legend: 1.00-1.74- Strongly Disagree (DS) 2.50-3.24- Agree (A) 1.75-2.49- Disagree (D) 3.25-4.00- Strongly Agree (SA)

As gleaned on Table 6, about the tour guiding competencies shows that the respondents agree on their leadership domain (M=2.91). They also agree on their conceptual/creative domain (M=2.85), interpersonal domain (M=2.85), and administrative domain (M=2.85). It implies that the respondents agree with an overall mean of 2.87, the study shows that the respondents were moderately competent. As shown in the study of Esperanzate et al., (2024), the level of skills competencies of Tourism Management students is moderately competent, meaning they have prior knowledge but still need further development. The limited real-world exposure and hands-on training made it harder for students to fully develop the skills they need to confidently step into industry roles. Without enough practical experience, they missed out on opportunities to apply what they learned in class, making it more challenging to build the confidence and expertise required in real-world settings.

Part III – Significant Difference

Table 7. Significant Difference Between the Level of Competencies in Tour Guiding According to Age

Age	N	Mean	H Test	df	p-value	Remarks
Conceptual/Creative Domain	39	98.40	11.800	5	.038	Rejected
18 Years Old						

19 Years Old	33	81.38				
20 Years Old	32	72.77				
21 Years Old	42	68.42				
22 Years Old	12	95.58				
23 Years Old	3	56.33				
Leadership Domain						
18 Years Old	39	98.76	13.321	5	.021	Rejected
19 Years Old	33	86.18				
20 Years Old	32	64.05				
21 Years Old	42	70.77				
22 Years Old	12	91.13				
23 Years Old	3	76.77				
Interpersonal Domain						
18 Years Old	39	94.51	7.455	5	.189	Accepted
19 Years Old	33	80.48				
20 Years Old	32	74.00				
21 Years Old	42	70.81				
22 Years Old	12	95.50				
23 Years Old	3	70.33				
Administrative Domain						
18 Years Old	39	101.78	20.993	5	.001	Rejected
19 Years Old	33	77.29				
20 Years Old	32	62.73				
21 Years Old	42	69.39				
22 Years Old	12	102.17				
23 Years Old	3	124.33				

The Kruskal-Wallis H Test was used to determine whether there were any statistically significant differences in the level of competencies in tour guiding according to age across four domains, such as the Conceptual/Creative, Leadership, Interpersonal, and administrative domain. The results revealed significant differences in the Conceptual/Creative Domain ($H(5) = 11.800, P = 0.038$), Leadership Domain ($H(5) = 13.321, P = 0.021$), and Administrative Domain ($H(5) = 20.993, P = 0.001$), indicating that the level of competencies in these areas varies across different age groups. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected for these domains at a 0.05 significance level. However, no statistically significant difference was found in the Interpersonal Domain ($H(5) = 7.455, P = 0.189$), suggesting that interpersonal competencies remain relatively consistent regardless of age. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted for this domain.

According to Dunn's pairwise tests, there was very strong evidence (adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the age among 18 years old, 19 years old, 20 years old, 21 years old, 22 years old and 23 years old in terms of their perception of the Conceptual/Creative Domain ($p < 0.038$), Leadership Domain ($p < 0.021$), Interpersonal Domain ($p < 0.189$), and Administrative Domain of the school, as perceived by the tourism students ($p < 0.001$).

Table 8. Significant Difference Between the Level of Competencies in Tour Guiding According to Sex.

	Sex	N	Mean Rank	U	p-value	Remarks
Conceptual/Creative Domain	Female	123	80.75	2080.500	.894	Accepted
	Male	33	91.95			
Interpersonal Domain	Female	123	83.74	1761.100	.136	Accepted
	Male	33	70.38			
Leadership Domain	Female	123	81.91	1996.000	.624	Accepted
	Male	33	77.48			
Administrative Domain	Female	123	79.16	1877.000	.320	Accepted
	Male	33	88.12			

A Mann-Whitney U Test was conducted to compare the gender differences in perceived competencies in tour guiding between male and female respondents. The results revealed no significant difference between male and female responses, as indicated by the test statistic and the p-value.

According to the Dunn's pairwise tests, there was no significant difference between male and female respondents in their perceived competencies in tour guiding ($p > 0.05$). This indicates that gender does not significantly influence the respondents' perceived level of competencies in tour guiding. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which suggests that there is no difference between male and female competencies, is accepted.

Table 9. Significant Difference Between the Level of Competencies in Tour Guiding According to Year Level.

Year Level	N	Mean	df	p-value	H Test	Remarks
Conceptual/Creative Domain						
1 st Year Level	56	96.70	3	.000	24.92	Rejected
2 nd Year Level	37	76.65				
3 rd Year Level	36	51.26				
4 th Year Level	32	94.33				
Leadership Domain						
1 st Year Level	56	96.42	3	.001	17.57	Rejected
2 nd Year Level	37	80.55				
3 rd Year Level	36	55.44				
4 th Year Level	32	83.28				
Interpersonal Domain						
1 st Year Level	56	93.70	3	.000	21.52	Rejected
2 nd Year Level	37	80.91				
3 rd Year Level	36	50.93				
4 th Year Level	32	92.72				
Administrative Domain						
1 st Year Level	56	100.35	3	.000	30.60	Rejected

2 nd Year Level	37	72.65				
3 rd Year Level	36	48.93				
4 th Year Level	32	92.88				

The Kruskal-Wallis H Test was used to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in the level of competencies in tour guiding according to year level across four domains such as the Conceptual/Creative Domain ($H(3) = 24.92, P = 0.000$), Leadership Domain ($H(3) = 17.57, P = 0.001$), Interpersonal Domain ($H(3) = 21.52, P = 0.000$), and Administrative Domain ($H(3) = 30.60, P = 0.000$) showing variations in competency levels across different year levels. Since all p-values are below 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected for all domains, confirming that year level significantly affects competencies in tour guiding.

According to Dunn's pairwise tests, there was very strong evidence (adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the year levels among first year, second year, third year, and fourth year in terms of their perception of the Conceptual/Creative Domain ($p=.000$), Leadership Domain ($p=.001$), Interpersonal Domain ($p=.000$), and Administrative Domain ($p=.000$) of the school, as perceived by the tourism students.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research study was to assess tourism management students' competencies in tour guiding to identify the specific skills, knowledge, and attitudes that contribute to their effectiveness in this key aspect of the tourism industry. By assessing the results, the researchers aim to provide insights into the preparedness of tourism management students to meet the demands of tour guiding and offer recommendations for improvements in curriculum development and practical training.

Part 1 - Profile of the Respondents

The study was carried out at the University located in Santiago City, Isabela, to assess the competencies of the tourism management students in tour guiding. The answers to the research questions presented at the beginning of the assessment were determined, and summaries followed based on the technique used throughout the study:

The study was composed of 161 tourism management students from the University located in Santiago City, Isabela. Assessing the competencies of tourism management students in tour guiding is important to help students recognize areas where they excel and where they may need improvement, and prepare them for a successful career that also benefits the tourism industry by enhancing service quality, resilience, and sustainability. The researchers found out that the respondents of the study were 20-21 years old, female, and belonged to the first-year level, but the rest of the year level was equally the same with each population. The minimum age of students enrolled as freshmen is 18 years old (Nwaku-Nwandu et al., 2024). In the study of (Bagon et al., 2023), the tourism program is dominated by a female student. All 161 respondents were moderately competent, as presented in the overall mean, compared to the utilization in (Kapa et al., 2022).

Part 2 – Tour Guiding Competencies

The respondents agreed that they were moderately competent in the conceptual/creative domain, showing that they understand the general concept of the tourism industry. They also agreed on leadership, interpersonal, and administrative domains, interpreted as moderately competent. As indicated in the leadership domain, the respondents strive to achieve positive working relations with people based on their perception of their work interaction. On the other hand, as indicated in the interpersonal domain, the respondents are willing to work with teams or groups rather than doing it alone. Lastly, as indicated in the administrative domain, the respondents always use all resources to get the best result for the situation.

This research study assessed competencies in different domains, including the conceptual/creative, leadership, interpersonal, and administrative domains. The results revealed that the respondents were moderately competent overall.

The factors assessing the competencies of the tourism management students at the University show that the respondents were moderately competent, as presented in the overall category mean of the study. However, as presented in the study of Bagon et al. (2023), the leadership domain and skills are strongly associated, which promotes better leadership.

The study also implies that there was a significant relationship between the skill level and domains. In addition, according to (Esperanzate et al., 2024), possessing a strong set of skills and the ability to learn any technical skills is very important in the tourism management industry. On the other hand, according to Rosyidi et al., (2021), there is a higher female percentage than male in the number of students enrolled in the Tourism Management program, which can impact the overall category mean of the study.

Part 3 – Significant Difference

In regards to identifying the significant difference in competencies of tourism management students in tour guiding according to the conceptual/creative domain, leadership domain, interpersonal domain, administrative domain, and demographic profile of the respondents, the results of Kruskal-Wallis H test and Dunn's pairwise test indicates that there was statistically significant difference in the level of competencies in tour guiding according to year level across four domains. The study revealed that the age and gender of the respondents have no significant relationship to the conceptual/creative domain, leadership domain, technical domain, and interpersonal domain.

Part 4 – Proposed measures to Enhance the Skills in Tour Guiding

As a tourism student, it is important to enhance the necessary skills in tour guiding by implementing a range of measures that target both technical proficiency and interpersonal competence. Thorough training programs must be implemented to provide essential skills such as communication, quality customer service, handling emergencies, and cultural sensitivity. In addition, workshops and seminars may provide a hands-on experience for aspiring tourism students, allowing them to apply their knowledge in realistic and practical scenarios. Language training may also guide aspiring tourism students, as the language barrier is also a common inconvenience in the tourism industry. In conclusion, continuous professional development training and programs play a significant role in the tourism industry, leading tourism students to become better professionals of tomorrow.

CONCLUSION

The following conclusions were drawn from the previous section and the results of the study.

1. The respondents of the study were 21 years old, female, and enrolled as 1st year students.
2. The respondents' level of competencies was agreeing or moderately competent in the Leadership Domain, Conceptual/Creative Domain, Interpersonal Domain, and Administrative Domain. The highest mean was in the Leadership Domain. Overall, the respondents were found to be moderately competent. The result suggests that respondents need further practical experience to fully improve their competencies and effectively apply them in tour guiding.
3. The study has significant differences found in competency levels when grouped by age, except in the interpersonal domain and year level, while no significant differences were observed based on gender.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were drawn from the conclusions of the study.

1. The school can improve students' decision-making abilities by including data analysis and problem-solving exercises in the tourism curriculum, offering real-world topics, and even providing hands-on training sessions that imitate tour guiding situations.

2. The school should provide crisis management and stress-handling workshops, implement realistic high-pressure tour guiding simulations, and establish mentorship programs.
3. The school curriculum should include interactive problem-solving exercises and conflict management training to help students become more adept at handling problems and boost their confidence when giving tours.
4. The school should improve tourist management students' strategic thinking and planning abilities by adding more hands-on exercises, case studies, and simulation activities to tour guiding courses.

Recommendations for Future Studies

1. This study should include other institutions offering tour guiding courses to compare and to identify best practices and gaps in curriculum implementation.
2. This study should examine how external factors, such as exposure and training opportunities, influence students' competencies in tour guiding.
3. This study should also include other competency areas to understand better the qualifications needed for tour guiding.
4. This study should analyze how different teaching methodologies affect the development of tour guiding competencies among students.
5. It would also be beneficial to incorporate qualitative data or complementary interviews with teachers and professionals in the field in order to enrich the interpretation of the results and contextualize the skills in practical situations.

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