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**Expectations and Satisfaction with Tour Guides' Performance:**

**An Evaluative Comparison Between Thailand and the UK**

**BY:**

**Suwanchai Hounnaklang**

**Dissertation submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements**

**for the degree of Doctoral in Tourism**

**4<sup>th</sup> March, 2002**

**The Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham, England**

### **Abstract:**

This research aims to study and compare tour guide training in the U.K. and Thailand, by investigating the tour guide training systems and curricula adopted in both countries. Key areas relating to tour guide training are focused such as: profiles and roles of tour guides, human resource management and tour guide employment. It is hoped that the study will make a significant contribution to this under-researched area. During his three-month fieldwork in each country, the researcher employed a qualitative approach to data collection including interviews, fieldnotes, observation and documentation gathering. After the fieldvisits had been completed, he analysed and compared tour guide training curricula in these two countries by using a methodology based around content analysis.

Despite tour guides' crucial role in the tourism industry, their status and recognition seem to be largely ignored by tourism-related managers, including their employers. Curiously, tour guides have been negatively perceived since the advent of the first cadre of tour guides, as unscrupulous people deserving little or no respect. One of the main reasons that the tour guiding profession has had such a negative image is the misconception that anybody can become a tour guide regardless of qualification or training requirements. Contemporary tour guides, in most countries, still have to endure the same prejudice despite their better educational backgrounds and improved training. The research findings uncovered chief differences in key areas of the tour guide training curricula surveyed in the U.K and Thailand such as: guide training philosophy, a guide training length, class size and guiding practice. Besides, guide motivations, recruitment and assessment process have proved crucial to raising tour guides' professionalism.

If Thailand wishes to raise the quality and standard of its tour guides, major areas of guide training curriculum must be properly addressed. The UK Blue-Badge tour guide's training and curriculum was selected for study and comparison was due to its exceptionally professional, strenuous and stringent training system. The researcher concluded his study by suggesting strategic solutions to concerned parties to suitably tackle and enhance the tour guide training in their countries. Above all, the tour guide training systems and curricula' s gaps have been comprehensively emphasised and discussed so that the key players, i.e. tour guide training organisers, particularly in Thailand, can ultimately improve the standard and quality of their outputs in a more professional manner.



## **Acknowledgement**

First of all, I wish to thank my sponsor, Dhurakijpundit University, Thailand, for the financial support in sending me to pursue the Tourism Study in the Nottingham Trent University, UK. My deep appreciation goes especially to Prof. Paitoon Pongsabutre for his valuable suggestions and encouragement.

I would like to profoundly thank my 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> supervisors, Prof. Myra Shackley and Dr. Sophie Turley, respectively, for their kind advice and tremendous morale support. My sincere thanks, to name just a few, to my colleagues Karen Smith and Tove Oliver who have always cheered me up. Besides, my heartfelt thanks go to my wonderful friends: Iris Barry, Don & Judith Cross, Nicola Godfrey-Evans, Katrine Prince (Director of Studies of Blue Badge Guide Training, London Tourist Board & City of London), Rosalind Hutchinson (Director of Studies, South East England Tourist Board), Jane Orde (former President of World Federation of Tourist Guide Lectures Association). Especially two great friends: Alan Spens and Ralph Baker, who were so patient in proofreading my manuscript.

I am also deeply grateful to many other resourceful individuals and parties concerned who have kindly facilitated and co-operated during my fieldwork in both the UK and Thailand namely: Assoc. Prof. Penpimom Premaswad (Director of Studies of Guide Training, Thammasat University), Mr. Kusa Panyarachun (Managing Director of World Travel Service Ltd.), Mr. Thakerngsak Suwanthat (President of Professional Guide Association of Thailand and Managing Director of The Oriental Scenery Co. Ltd.), Mr. Suparerk Surangul (Managing Director of Noom-Sao Tour) and the staff of Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT).

Last but not least, my dissertation could not have been possibly completed had it not been for the dedication and great support from my wife, Mrs. Hounnaklang, Nuchanard, who has been extremely patient in looking after me without fail especially while I was mentally and physically tired.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

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**This chapter aims to introduce the major areas of literature pertaining to this research and consider how they have shaped and focused the investigation. The key issues and areas of work are briefly reviewed and the study placed within its wider context. The objectives of this research are established and the structure of the thesis presented.**

---

### 1.1 Tour Guides and Tourism

Tourism is arguably one of the biggest and fastest growing global industries, and tour guides are, in essence, one of the key players in the tourism industry who can significantly *make* or *break* the travelling experience of their tour participants. The tourism literature acknowledges the importance of tour guides in tourism. (Schmidt, 1979; Cohen, 1985; Dearden & Harron, 1992). Tour guides are, therefore, the front line workers who, to a greater extent, will be taking their visitors around and responsible for assuring their tour participants' satisfaction.

### 1.2 Tour Guide Training and Its Concept

It is suggested that (Pond, 1993) training, evaluation and regulation of tour guides have contributed greatly to all individuals and parties concerned, i.e. visiting tourists, visitor attractions, guide employers, the regions and the country as a whole, particularly tour guides themselves, in relation to their standard and professionalism. Therefore, the importance of training, evaluation and regulation of guides, especially the level of professionals must be addressed (Ap & Wong)<sup>1</sup>. If the issue of

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<sup>1</sup> Case study on tour guiding: professionalism, issues and problems *Tourism Management* 22(2001)

professionalism, and the problems and concerns about tour guiding are not properly handled, complaints from those visitors, from overseas in particular, could result in a negative image for visitor attractions and reputation of the country and, consequently, a considerable decrease of tourist arrivals.

### **1.3 The Emergence of Tour Guide Training Study**

Tourism authors concurred that the study of tourism research has stemmed from a variety of academy disciplines (Jafari & Aaser, 1988; Sheldon, 1990; Graburn & Jafari, 1991; Przeclawski, 1993; Echtner & Jamal, 1997), as does the study of tour guiding and, in particular guide training (see chapter 5 & 6), a relatively new field of research (Pond, 1993; Holloway, 1979, 1981; Cohen, 1985, 1996; Ap & Wong, 2001). Tour guiding and guide training research originate from both practitioner (Pond, 1993; Cross, 1979, 1991) and, mainly, from academic arenas (Almagor, 1985; Cohen, *ibid.*; Holloway, *ibid.*; Ap & Wong, *ibid.*). It is thus evident that in the area of tour guiding and tour guide training, an increased exploration and investigation is still much needed, given the significant roles of tour guides towards the tourism industry (see Chapter 3). Both Tour guide and tour guide training can be approached from a Human Resource Management (HRM) perspective.

### **1.4 Tour Guide Training and Human Resource Management**

Whilst HRM has been a major study in the field of hospitality, it has; however, been significantly less highlighted in that of tourism literature. Worth noting is that, despite a scarce HRM literature in tourism research, Baum's work is a remarkable exception (Baum 1993a, 1993b, 1995, 1997; Baum *et al* 1997; Baum & Nickson, 1998). Despite this insufficiency of related research and study, it is admitted that people who are employees and visitors are the key players with crucial role in the delivery and consumption of tourism products (Baum, 1993a, Carlzon, 1997). The management of human resources is, to a certain extent, regarded as a system and this could be applied to tour guides who are paid workers (Swarbrooke, 1995).

### **1.5 The Study**

The research is based on two broad objectives: firstly, to study and compare tour guide training in the UK and Thailand. Secondly, to explore tour guides' standards and professionalism. The main objective of this thesis is to explore and compare the

present situation of tour guide training in two countries: the UK and Thailand. More specifically, the researcher aims:

- To study the current state of tour guide training in the UK and Thailand.
- To explore the current tour guiding practice.
- To identify the issues and problems encountered by tour guide training institutions and tour guiding profession.
- To examine the strengths and weaknesses of tour guide training.
- To suggest feasible strategic solution to improve the level of standard, professionalism and quality of guide training.
- To recommend suitable approaches to the tourism-related bodies in order to effectively enhance the quality of all components of guide training system and, more importantly, to make it more sustainable development.

The research is grounded in a phenomenological paradigm with a stress on a dual methodology, that is in-depth qualitative interviews and a content analysis. A one-stage quota-judgement sampling strategy is used to identify four representative guide-training institutions where fieldwork took place. These were selected on the basis of key characteristics, including governing body and size. The research thus focuses on the medium and large guide training institutions. This research will investigate and compare the management of guide training between that of the UK and Thailand.

During his fieldwork in these two countries, the researcher employed a series of interviews with directors of studies, guide trainers/lecturers, travel agents/tour operators, tour guides, guide associations and, last but not least, government's tourism

agencies. The interviews are transcribed verbatim and triangulated with fieldnotes, observations and documentation gathered during fieldvisits.

### **1.5.1 Tour Guide Training Institution**

In Thailand, tour guide training organisers are mostly educational institutions approved by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) to organise tour guide training courses. This research found that 50 of these institutions, i.e. colleges and universities have consistently organised tour guide training at least once a year, in addition to a few government agencies namely the Royal Forestry Department, Tourism Authority of Thailand's Bangsaen Tourism Training Institute. Worth noting is that 51 other educational institutions (which may or may not organise tour guide training courses) offering tourism and hospitality degree programs are also entitle to provide their students with tour guide ID card. However, in the UK, Blue Badge guide training differs greatly in that guide training organisers who are, generally, very experienced Blue Badge tour guides are able to organise guide training courses regardless of the regional/national permission. It is estimated that, in many cities of the UK, there are between 15-20 Blue Badge tour guide training organisers whose director of studies will usually get together at least once a year to discuss and update one another on tour guide training matters.

In the tourism research, tour guide training is a relatively under-researched area (Ap & Wong, 2001) as opposed to several other domains, and work has highlighted tour guides' roles and attributes, their performance and service quality. How tour guides are selected and trained or how tour guide training courses are operated is hardly addressed. Albeit few researches on tour guide training have been undertaken, this does not necessarily mean that tour guides are of less significant compared to other front-line staff of the tourism industry. This research has put an emphasis on a guide training programme in the UK and Thailand, since tour guides' standard and professionalism is largely based on how well they have been trained. As it was mentioned earlier that tour guides' performance could be significantly enhanced by having been well trained (Pond, 1993 *ibid.*). The Blue Badge tour guide training was chosen for study and comparison was due to its exceptionally high training standard encompassing rigorous and strenuous guiding practice.

This research also focused on other significant areas relating to tour guide training aspect; i.e. profiles and roles of tour guides and tour guide employment. Though a large number of outsiders' preconception towards a guiding profession as being a glamorous and ideal job, only tour guides themselves well realise what they have to go through. Therefore, the nature of a tour-guiding job, guides' motivations, income and gratuities are encompassed. To obtain related material and data, the researcher has to do extensive interviews with forty-four (twenty two in each country) concerned individuals in both the UK and Thailand including four directors of studies, four guide trainers/lecturers, four travel agents/tour operators, eight tour guides, one from guide association and one from government tourism agency.

### **1.5.2 Working Definition**

In the UK, Blue Badge tour guide training programme is organised by non-governmental organisation (despite directly or indirectly related to national/regional tourist board); whereas in Thailand, it is nearly always run by both government and private educational institutions, i.e. colleges and universities. Therefore, in order to define the scope of the study, the researcher has developed a working definition of the term 'guide training institution'. In the UK, this *term* refers to "a non-governmental organisation with approval from the regional/national tourist board, responsible for organising tour guide training courses for successful guide applicants". By the same token, in Thailand, the working definition of the term 'guide training institution' refers to "any educational institution (or occasionally non-educational institution) with the permission from the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), responsible for organising guide training courses for successful guide applicants".

Using this definition, a population of guide training institution will be established and used as the basis for sampling institutions for further study. The aim of this concentration on tour guide training institution is twofold: firstly to examine and compare how guide training courses operate in both the UK and Thailand and, secondly, to study the quality and professionalism of tour guides in these two countries. By studying guide training courses with a common theme, i.e. guide training philosophy, selection/examination process, curriculum and practical guiding, their approaches to the management of guide training programme can then be compared. A telephone survey is employed to determine those sampling population.

## 1.6 The Structure of the Research

This part is considered as a 'route map' (Saunders *et al*, 1997:375) to the thesis, which covers the following elements: introducing each chapter and detailing its contribution to the work. This thesis takes a logical approach to examining the literature: tourism, tour guide training and its concepts, which are initially examined prior to reviewing the related issues.

Chapter Two and Three: *Profiles and Roles of Tour Guides in Thailand*. In these two chapters, the researcher investigates key personalities and characteristics of tour guides. Various roles assumed by tour guides are studied and illustrated as well as tour guides' key responsibilities. These two chapters cover major areas such as guide motivations, guiding fees, gratuities, and working condition. Besides, the expectations of their visitors, people in general, the government and private bodies concerned, regarding tour guides' performance are also studied.

To many outsiders, a guiding career seems to promise challenging and exciting opportunities, which do not exist elsewhere. Tour guides have good chance to travel and meet a lot of people at the same time. They may accompany their tourists abroad as tour leaders or tour managers. If they speak foreign languages, they will also get to know and be friends with foreign tourists visiting their country, even after the tourists have returned home. Tour guides are often regarded as *unofficial ambassadors* of their own country and thus are expected to act as representatives of their town, region and country as a whole. However, one must not forget that tour guides at the same time have to represent both themselves and their company.

Some people believe that tour guides earn a considerable amount of money from tips and commissions, especially during the tourist season, and that they live comfortably out of this income. Interestingly, the author found out that this is the case with most tour guides in Thailand in which a large number of tour guides have been financially motivated and, arguably, many of them have earned a substantial amount of "commission" during tourist season. However, this is not the case with the UK Blue Badge tour guides who even resent with taking "tips" from their tourists since they regard themselves as professional tour guides. Though a guiding career is being



perceived as one of the most ideal jobs (Pond: 1993), only tour guides themselves understand what they have to go through and how much they have to struggle in order to survive, compared to people in other careers. Ironically speaking, while tour guides are given much credit for “making or breaking” the tours, at the same time they are not paid as well as they are supposed to be. Especially, tour guides in Thailand have received a comparatively poor guiding fees and recognition, with the consequences that they tend to “expect” commissions and “rely” on them to compensate for their low going-rate.

By comparison, the Blue Badge tour guides in the UK have received both high recognition and much better guiding fees. It is not only the financial returns that inspire people to become tour guides, but it is also a fact that the nature of the job is not a routine one. Most of them do enjoy guiding and meeting people, and many Blue Badge tour guides are self-employed; free-lancers who do a guiding job as a second income. Tour guides have a job within which they can have considerable autonomy, which constitutes to high level of job satisfaction. To them, a guiding job is very exciting since they never know what types of tourists they are going to accompany and where they are going to take them to. A sense of achievement and fulfilment once the trip ends and tourists giving compliments is also an important inspiring factor (Holloway, 1979).

Arguably, a guiding job, by its very nature, is a very high pressured job because tour guides have to dedicate themselves by sacrificing virtually all their time, including family and other social commitments to their guiding responsibilities. They frequently have to work seven days a week in peak season in order to compensate for the off-peak one. It is inevitable that their personality is gradually affected with the result that they become “hard” people due to the stress and strain from such work.

Chapter Four: *Research Design and Methodology*. In this chapter, the researcher discusses the approaches adopted in his study, covering the research design and methodologies. Qualitative approach is the key research tool including in-depth interviews, observations, fieldnotes and documentation gathering. Also, this chapter reviews the research objectives and identify the related issues arising from the literature review. Later, the definition and study population are then clarified, and the

research design identified and examined. This research methodology consisted of the adoption of a series of qualitative interviews with different individuals and parties concerned in the UK and Thailand: guide training organisers, guide trainers/lecturers, travel agents/tour operators, tour guides, professional guide association, national tourism agency as well as documentation collected during the fieldwork and observations.

Chapter Five and Six: *Preliminary Findings: Tour Guide Training in the UK and Thailand*. In these two chapters, the researcher explores and compares tour guide training system between the guide training course of Thailand and that of the UK (Blue Badge guide training course). It covers guide training philosophy, recruitment criteria, course subjects, tuition fees, as well as supports from organisations concerned. A comparison is drawn between key areas of tour guide training to illustrate the differences and similarities. In spite of the fact that other forms of tour guide training courses in the UK do exist, the UK Blue Badge guide training was deliberately chosen for a comparison, because of its strenuous and rigorous training system.

It has been seriously debatable as to whether tour guides need training to be good and efficient. In other words, the majority of tour guides still question the quality and extent of tour guide training can contribute. However, one of the features of successful tour guide training is the quality of the *end* product. Until the proclamation of the Tourism Business and Guide Act in 1994, the majority of the practising tour guides in Thailand, as well as foreign tour guides/tour leaders, had freely done a guiding job without being properly monitored and licensed.

There is no question about what guide training can contribute to the standard and quality of tour guides. Thus, the individuals and organisations concerned all have significant roles to play in supporting and enhancing the guide training system and curriculum. Guide training establishments are of paramount importance as being the “front door” to prospective guide trainees. Emphasis in selecting the right candidates must be placed upon:

- a balanced guide selection panel, consisting of a representative from related organisations such as tourist organisation, guide association and tour operators.
- Right attitude of guide applicants who genuinely want to pursue a guiding career.
- Suitable personality and mentality of guide applicants.

Despite having obtained the “right” guide candidates, it is also crucial for guide training organisers to be aware of the following key areas, such as:

- A practical training period which ensures sufficient “practice” guiding and knowledge for guiding.
- Guide trainers/lecturers must be carefully selected. Experienced tour guides are the most suitable people in assuming guide trainers/lecturers’ roles.
- Refresher courses must be initiated in order to ensure sustainable quality and efficiency of practising tour guides.

More details of the above features are illustrated by in-depth interviews of parties and individuals concerned.

Chapter Seven: *Preliminary Findings: Tour Guide Employment*. In this chapter, the researcher presents the preliminary findings covering the studies and investigation of the development of tour guiding as a career in Thailand, in terms of its past, present scenario, and future outlook. Such considerations will take into account characteristics and nature of the guiding job relating to tour guides themselves; tour guiding-related problems and possible solutions, as well as sources of income and its implications. The key factors contributing to the failure and success of guiding will also be discussed. Nevertheless, it is felt that the picture of the guiding job would not

be clearly portrayed without a brief comparison with tour guiding in the UK exemplified by Blue Badge guides.

It has to be admitted that the academic literature concerning tour guide training and tour guiding is rather limited. This is partly attributable to the fact that this type of career has not been much recognised by the general public and also because, compared with other career, a guiding job is not as secure and promotable. The public perception and tour guides' attitudes are also wary about tour guiding as a career. Pond (1993) rightly points out how tour operators and travel agents, despite their admission about its significance as being able to 'make or break the tour', do not pay adequate fees to guides.

In Thailand a tour guiding is often regarded by many as a somewhat cunning way of exploiting tourists specifically foreign visitors. Stories of overseas visitors from Taiwan, Hong Kong especially from China mainland, who were taken to jewellery shops and then being ripped off have hit the headlines frequently. To some, tour guiding is sometimes thought of as a career without dignity and morals resulting in tour guides being seen as unethical people. To others, it is deemed as a glamorous, dream job (Pond, *ibid.*). In Thailand, the majority of tour guides are freelancers; very few, if any, being full timers. This is partly because many tour guides prefer to have more freedom in choosing to work for different tour operators/travel agents, and partly because tour operators or travel agents could not afford to hire permanent tour guides due to the seasonal nature of tourism. Only a handful of established tour operators which have visitors more regularly might have one or two permanent ones to work both as administrative and stand-by tour guides.

The advantage of working full time for some tour guides is obvious: job security. By comparison, free-lancers may find it more difficult than full-timers to get a guiding job during the low tourist season. Therefore, most of them have to find some other job such as teaching music or English, secretariat or sales assistant. These free-lancers have to work very hard and make as much money in the peak-tourist season to compensate for the time when they have no tours.

People who take on a guiding job come from various and diverse backgrounds such as teachers, police, office workers, government officials, unemployed people and people between jobs, as well as students. Most of them expect good financial returns in addition to having the opportunity to socialise with foreign visitors while escorting them around. Other prime motivations include incentives like 'commissions' and 'tips'. All tour guides whom the author had interviewed admitted that 'commission' is essentially the most significant reason that they become tour guides. The guiding fee is hardly significant and they would be happy to work even without it as long as a guiding job is available.

Chapter Eight: *Preliminary Findings: Organisational Support*. In this chapter, the researcher attempts to illustrate and discuss matters related organisations in terms of their involvement and support towards tour guide training in the U.K and Thailand. Despite the fact that guide training organisers in both countries are able to manage on their own, assistance and encouragement by those institutions have proved significant and crucial for the smoothness and success for the whole guide training operation.

Chapter Nine: *The Main Findings and Analysis*. In this chapter, the researcher presents the findings of this research by employing a content analysis in comparing tour guide training curriculum adopted in both the U.K and Thailand. The key findings of this research are discussed in reference to the literature. The original contribution of this work is highlighted and the research process appraised.

Chapter Ten: *Conclusions*. In this chapter, the researcher summarises major points of the whole thesis and suggests strategic solutions to the parties concerned to enhance the management of tour guide training. It also highlighted key areas' strengths and weaknesses and the implications for the academic study of guide training and tourism, and the management of guide training courses.

## Chapter 2

### Profiles of Tour Guides

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**This chapter attempts to broadly investigate key attributes and characteristics of tour guides. It has covered areas such as guide personality, attitudes and motivations. The guiding fees, gratuities and working conditions are also discussed. Besides, the expectations of the tour participants, people in general, the government and private bodies concerned regarding tour guides' performance are explored.**

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#### 2.1 Introduction

Some people believe that tour guides earn a considerable amount of income, particularly from visitors' tips and from tourism-related establishments' commissions. Others also reckon that tour guides, while on duty, have such a good chance to travel and meet a lot of people at the same time. This is true if they accompany their tour participants abroad as tour leaders/tour managers or as *outbound* tour guides. Besides, if they speak foreign languages and work with overseas visitors as *inbound* tour guides, they will also get to know and befriend foreign tourists visiting their country, even after the tourists have returned home.

To many outsiders, a tour guide's job seems to promise challenging and exciting opportunities, which do not exist elsewhere. In addition, a guiding job enables them to have their own autonomy to choose when to work and whom to work for. However, very few people realise how demanding a tour guide's job is. Working as tour guides, they have to work very hard, especially during the high-peak tourist season, taking their visitors around day in day out. Unavoidably, tour guides have to devote their family time and other social commitments for the sake of their job. It is thus fair to say

that only tour guides themselves well realise what they have to go through and how much they have to sacrifice compared to people in other careers.

Despite all this, a number of outsiders' misconception that tour guides have good opportunity of meeting various visitors every day, and that they live comfortably out of their guiding income still prevails. It is therefore not surprising that a tour guide's job is being perceived to be one of the most ideal professions (Pond: 1993).

## 2.2 Definition

Based on the Oxford English Reference Dictionary (1995:1154): "a profile is a characteristic personal manner or attitude", whereas the Cambridge International Dictionary of English (1995:1128) says that "a profile is a short description of someone containing all the most important or interesting facts about them". Thus, the definition intended to be used in this chapter encompasses both of the above, so that the analysis of a guide's profiles and related features can be clearly portrayed.

Before further discussion, the researcher would like to consider one important *term* to be used in this study, that is *guide* or, rather, *tour guide*. According to the dictionary (Oxford English Reference Dictionary, 1995:624), The term *guide* refers to:

- A person who leads or shows the way, or directs the movements of a person or group or,
- A person who conducts visitors or tourists on tours etc.

Pond (1993, op.cit.) suggests that a tour guide, in a strict definition, is "one who conducts a tour...who has a broad-based knowledge of a particular area whose primary duty is to inform". However, in the researcher's opinion, tour guides are also front line staff working directly or indirectly with the tourism industry and tourism-related businesses. Furthermore, tour guides are persons who are supposed to perform, to their best ability, a guiding job in an as honest and truthful manner as possible in order to enhance visitors' travelling experience during their trip, and until their departure. More importantly, tour guides are those who not only represent themselves

and their company, but their city, attraction and country as a whole with great pride in their own country's heritage.

It is tour guides' responsibility to take the best care of their visitors, so that after they return home they would bring with them a memorable experience to relate to their friends and relations who might be the prospective visitors.

Tour guides are arguably the key players in the tourism industry who 'make or break' their tour participants' travelling experience. They are also regarded as front line staff who, to a greater extent, will be showing their tourists attractions according to the tour itinerary and responsible for making the tour successful. They therefore will ensure their tour participants' satisfaction. It is discovered that tour guides' performance plays a significant role in making the tour successful (Geva and Goldman, 1991).

### **2.3 Various Terms Used**

Though it is still debatable among tourism-related businesses regarding a specific term to be used, the terms *tour guide* or *tourist guide* carry the same meaning, and are sometimes interchanged. Throughout Europe and most of the world, the term *tourist guide* rather than *tour guide* is used (Pond, 1993). Though the responsibility of leading groups of tourists may carry different titles, there is still no consensus in the industry regarding the correct use of these job titles.

However, in Denmark, the term tour escort or tour guide is used for both guide and courier and it also combines tour managing, but in the Netherlands, the term guide escort has a sexual meaning for lady hostesses. However, in Thailand, the term guide escort carries the similar connotation and does not apply to the practising tourist guides in general. In France, the term Guide Interprete is equivalent to a guide, the term L'Accompagnateur (1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> class) equals a tour manager, the term Hostesse de la route is generally a female courier/tour manager; and the term Hostesse d'accueil is a receptionist and welfare person (usually female). In Paris, hostesses are generally couriers or receptionists who do a little guiding. Worth noting is that in Thailand, Hong Kong (and elsewhere), the common term used is a tour co-ordinator which combines guide and courier, and possibly tour manager and some tour planning (Cross, 1979).



Nevertheless, some different titles employed in various countries and particular locations are as follows: *National park guides* (UK, USA, Africa), *Country park warden* (small areas), *Nature guides* (Belgium), *Walking guides* for rambles, *Rural tourism guides* (French National Parks), *Mountain guides* (France, Norway, Switzerland, Himalayas), *House/In-house guides* (stately homes, palaces, museums), *Boat guides* (Amsterdam, Venice, Paris, Cologne), *Cathedral guides* (St.Pauls, Westminster Abbey), *Trekking guides* (Thailand's Northern region).

Though there are different terms and titles for tour guides being adopted in many countries, it is necessary to cover some other definitions and distinctions for a better understanding of tour guides' attributes and characteristics. The next section will deal with various meanings of tour guides in a wider perspective.

## **2.4 Other Definitions and Distinctions**

Despite the fact that the term tour guide carries a common understanding in tourism, it has to be noted that it also includes other definitions and distinctions, such as:

- *A tour guide* is a person who conducts tourists round places of interest in a country on foot, by coach or by other means of transport and who imparts information during the itinerary, and may include a tour courier's responsibilities.
- *A tour courier* is a person who welcomes and looks after tourists during a visit, accompanies them in transit and overseas, their welfare, accommodation, transport services, etc.
- *A tour manager* often combines both of these services (tour guide and tour courier), but with an emphasis on courier duties and works chiefly internationally, accompanying a group on extended tours of several countries.

- *A guide lecturer* is a person who is generally understood to be a specialist in particular areas or fields of knowledge and will accompany a group nationally or internationally, guiding and giving lectures where appropriate. (The British Guilds of Guide Lecturers is primarily composed of tourist guides despite its name).
- *A driver-guide* will combine the job of a tourist guide and a tour courier with the ability to drive the tourists in his own or a hired vehicle.
- *A driver-courier* will combine a job of tour courier and the ability to drive, i.e., a coach driver on an extended tour who does not generally act as a guide.

Worth noting is that the types of tour guides vary from one country to another, and one region to another. Besides, the word tour guide may include a wide range of guides such as: a government guide, a business/industry guide, an urban guide, an adventure guide, a driver-guide, a tour guide (sometimes called a courier), a local guide, or even a step-on guide (or just *step-on*). Therefore, it is not surprising that few people can differentiate, in particular, tour guides and interpreters.

## **2.5 Differences between Tour Guides and Interpreters**

To a large number of outsiders, confusion and misunderstanding prevail between tour guides and interpreters. In general, tour guides work for travel agents/tour operators or ground operators and are assigned to a group tour: they have to meet their tourists either at the airport or hotels to help and co-ordinate visitor attractions, meals and hotel check-ins and stays with their group tour until their departure (Pond, *ibid.*). They have to take good care of their tour participants including giving a commentary on the itinerary's attractions throughout the entire tour to ensure their satisfaction. However, the word *interpreter* has many accepted meanings such as *translator of foreign languages* and *one who communicates by sign language*. The National Association for Interpretation's definition of interpreter was quoted by Pond (1993, *op.cit.*) as one who performs the art of revealing meanings and relationships in natural, cultural, recreational and historical resources. In this, Pond (1993:27) explained that:

"Since interpretation emerged in the National Park Service and has been widely adopted by the public sector, many people assume that interpreters are strictly public-sector guides....This is misleading perception, however, since many interpreters exist as guides in foundations, corporations, and other realms of the private sector".

In addition, Cherem (1977) was also cited as saying that two characteristics of an interpreter are that (Table 1 & 2):

- He is based on-site and offers first hand experiences with that site or with subject matter and real objects found at that site. Occasionally, he leaves his on-site base of operations and travels to surrounding communities to offers off-site interpretative programmes as well.
- He serves voluntary, non-captive visitors who are in a leisure frame of mind and who anticipate an enjoyable experience.

Tour guides are, however, are very likely to leave a site and travel within surrounding communities. Besides, despite the fact that their tour participants are there voluntarily for leisure and enjoyment, they are often to a greater extent captive, bound to motorcoaches, hotels, and the schedule of a tour.

Pond (ibid.) has also suggested that, many people have devoted their career to study and practice of interpretation, and it has evolved into a respected field which offers people opportunities to study interpretation courses at all levels, ranging from undergraduate to post graduate studies in colleges and universities. Owing to an increasing popularity, many museums, visitor attractions and educational institutions have adopted the field of interpretation, its terminology and principles, and benefited from the field.

In contrast, the majority of tour guides in many countries have had little professional or academic support, and no general accepted courses of study or educational standards. Some tour guides may argue that even tour guide training has, to a greater

extent, nothing to do with tour guides' performance and individual guides' attributes, let alone academic work or educational qualifications. These will be discussed in more details in chapter six and seven, tour guide training in the UK and Thailand.

**Table 1: Traditional and Emerging Types of Interpreters**

**As Defined by Site**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Site</b>
• Park Interpreter	• Natural/historical parks
• Public Lands Interpreter	• Forests, wildlife refuges and range lands
• Historical Interpreter	• Historical sites
• Museum Interpreter	• Historical/archaeological/natural history, science, and art museums
• Zoo Interpreter	• Zoological park
• Arboretum Interpreter	• Arboretum/botanical garden
• Theme Park Interpreter	• Disney World, Sea World
• Visitor Attraction Interpreter	• A particular visitor attraction
• Farm Interpreter	• Vacation farms/ranches, outdoor markets
• Industrial Interpreter	• Breweries, nuclear power plants
• Urban Interpreter	• A particular city & man-made/natural features
• Governmental/legal Interpreter	• Supreme court, law establishments
• Transportation Corridor Interpreter	• Based in a vehicle and interpreting the corridor environment/region through which the vehicle (air plane, train, bus...) passes.

**Source: After Pond's Clarification of Types of Interpreter (1993:29)**

**Table 2: Traditional and Emerging Types of Interpreters****As Defined by the Subject Matter (Interpreted at the Site)**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Fact Base</b>
• Interpretative Naturalist	• Natural history/ecology/environmental issues
• Resource Management Interpreter	• Forest, range, wildlife, watershed management
• Recreational Interpreter	• Fishing, camping, boating, outdoor activities
• Historical Interpreter	• History (local/regional/national/world)
• Archaeological Interpreter	• Archaeology, pre-history
• Cultural Interpreter	• Anthropology, ethnic/religious groups
• Sky Interpreter	• Astronomy, constellations, weather
• Energy Interpreter	• Energy production, use, conservation
• Marine Interpreter	• Oceanography, sea/fresh water, shoreline above water/underwater phenomena
• Agricultural Interpreter	• Food growth and processing

**Source: After Pond's Clarification of Types of Interpreter (1993:29)**

It is evident from the tables above (Table 1 & 2) that, the interpreters are, broadly speaking, site-based guides whose duty comes to an end after their visitors leave their sites; whereas tour guides will have to escort their tour participants around and still remain with them until the last day of their visit. However, before any further investigation of tour guides' profiles, human resource literature will be reviewed and discussed in relation to tour guides and their attributes.

## **2.6 Human resource management**

Section 2.1 identified the public perception of tour guides' profession and the nature of tour guiding, and section 2.5 highlighted the differences between tour guides and interpreters. Human resource management (HRM) is one of the important themes in

both areas and this section attempts to provide a brief overview of HRM as relevant to the focus of this study: the management of tour guide training.

## **2.7 Human resource management: an overview**

There is an extensive body of literature concerning the nature and theories of HRM. The aim of this section is to provide a *brief* overview of the area before considering HRM in relation to the fields of tourism and tour guiding. HRM can be seen as a product of the 1980s (Blunt, 1990; Bratton & Gold, 1999) and represents a move away from traditional personnel management, towards a wider perspective (Wood, 1994). While one approach has been to contrast HRM with traditional personnel management (for example, Storey, 1992) this division is not necessarily straightforward and Legge (1995) discusses the problematic nature of these attempts. Storey (1992) 'maps' the various meanings of HRM on a matrix of 'strong' to 'weak' and 'hard' to 'soft' (see appendix 1). Although the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive (Foot & Hook, 1999; Legge, 1995). Storey (1995:8) postulates that:

"While an emphasis on the former ('hard' HRM) might lead to a more calculative approach to the handling of the labour resource, the latter ('soft') might be expected to lead to a stress on the development of employees".

As summarised by Thornhill and Saunders (1998:462): "The 'Soft' version emphasises a people-centred approach to the management of human resources, whereas the 'hard' version emphasises a resource-based approach". In her comprehensive overview of the debate surrounding the development of HRM, Legge (1995:66) highlights that soft 'developmental humanist' model involves "...treating employees as valued assets, a source of competitive advantage through their commitment, adaptability and high quality"; the emphasis is therefore on generating commitment through "...communication, motivation and leadership" (Storey, 1987:6). As an element of the progression from personnel management to versions of HRM, Foot & Hook (1999) highlight the pivotal role of the line manager as one of the major characteristics of HRM (see Storey, 1992): the management of human resources are seen as central to all business activities, and thus traditional 'personnel manager' activities are increasingly undertaken by line managers.

## 2.8 Human Resource Management and Tourism

The extent to which the disciplines of tourism and hospitality are interlinked is a subject of debate (see, for example, Chen & Groves, 1999; Howey *et al*, 1999; Stear & Griffin, 1993); discussion at a tourism and hospitality research conference identified the two fields as "...distinct but overlapping concentrations" (Faulkner & Goeldner, 1998: 77). However, whereas HRM has been a focus of hospitality research, it has received less consideration in the tourism literature. HRM was one of the five central research themes identified in Costa *et al*'s (1997) review of hospitality and tourism journals<sup>2</sup>, and both Prabhu's<sup>3</sup> (1996). And Blum's<sup>4</sup> (1997) reviews of North American hospitality journals identified people and organisations as key themes. Other texts also exist that consider HRM in relation to the hospitality industry (see, for example, Boella, 1996; Go *et al*, 1996; Mullins, 1995; Wood, 1994). While Costa *et al*'s (1997) review included both hospitality and tourism publications, the consideration of HRM and tourism has been more limited, although work by Baum (for example, 1995, 1997; with Nickson, 1998; *et al*, 1997), and in particular his edited volume (1993b), are notable exceptions. Although Ridley (1995) in her review of two service industry journals<sup>5</sup> identified 'employees' as one of five hospitality and tourism themes, the majority of references were to hospitality based studies. In contrast to hospitality journals, Hing & Dimmock's (1997) review of three Asia Pacific-based tourism journals<sup>6</sup> over eight years revealed a complete absence of HRM issues: of the five themes identified, the single 'tourism employment' article focussed on employment impacts rather than management and was part of a 'social, economic and cultural impacts of tourism' strand. In his content-analysis of academic entries in the WHATT-CD International Hospitality and Tourism Research Register, Ingram (1996) identified general management issues as one of the four broad categories of research activity, further divided into the sub-themes of operations, support services, and people. Work in this area reflects an interest in 'managing

<sup>2</sup> 1996 volumes of *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *Tourism Management and Travel & Tourism Analysis*.

<sup>3</sup> The *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 1990-1995.

<sup>4</sup> 1996 volumes of *Hospitality Research Journal*, *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly* and *Florida International University Review*.

<sup>5</sup> The *International Journal of Service Industry Management* and *Service Industries Journal*, 1989-1994.

<sup>6</sup> The *Journal of Tourism Studies*, *Tourism Recreation Research* and the *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 1989-1996

effectively' and one of Ingram's proposed actions advocates research looking at the changing role of people at work.

Baum (1993a:3) argues the cliché that "...tourism is about people" is a reality: first, there are the tourists themselves; second, as a labour-intensive service industry, much of the tourism product is dependent upon people for its delivery; and third, that people are an integral part of many tourism products. Baum (1993a: 4) encapsulates this in the crucial notion that: "When purchasing the tourism product the client is also, in a sense, buying the skills, service and commitment of a range of human contributors to the experience they are about to embark upon..."

Carlzon (1987) identified and emphasised the importance of 'Moments of Truth' in the service delivery relationship; these are all interactions between customers and staff that impact on the customer's experience of quality. For example, in the case of managed visitor attractions Laws (1998:546) notes that "...the quality of the service experience for each visitor is affected by interactions with staff, but this takes places in the context of the physical setting and the managerial concepts underlying the visit".

The 'tourism industry experiences particular challenges to the management of 'Moments of Truth' because of the fragmented nature of the experience for many tourists (Baum, 1995, 1997); nevertheless, in common with other service industries, the majority of these customer encounters are with front-line staff (Mahesh, 1993). As Baum & Nickson (1987:75) note, the contradiction inherent in this situation is that the front-line staff crucial to the service delivery relationship are also those "...receiving the poorest remuneration, working in the least attractive conditions and in a casual or temporary capacity". The 1990s have seen the development of an increasingly flexible and diverse workforce (Bryson, 1999; Foot & Hook, 1999), and the tourism industry in particular relies on seasonal, part-time and temporary employees (Baum, 1997)

Baum (1993a) identified four levels of policy responses and strategies to human resource issues: at the individual business, local, national and regional (i.e. trans-national) levels. The majority of published tourism and HRM policy literature have

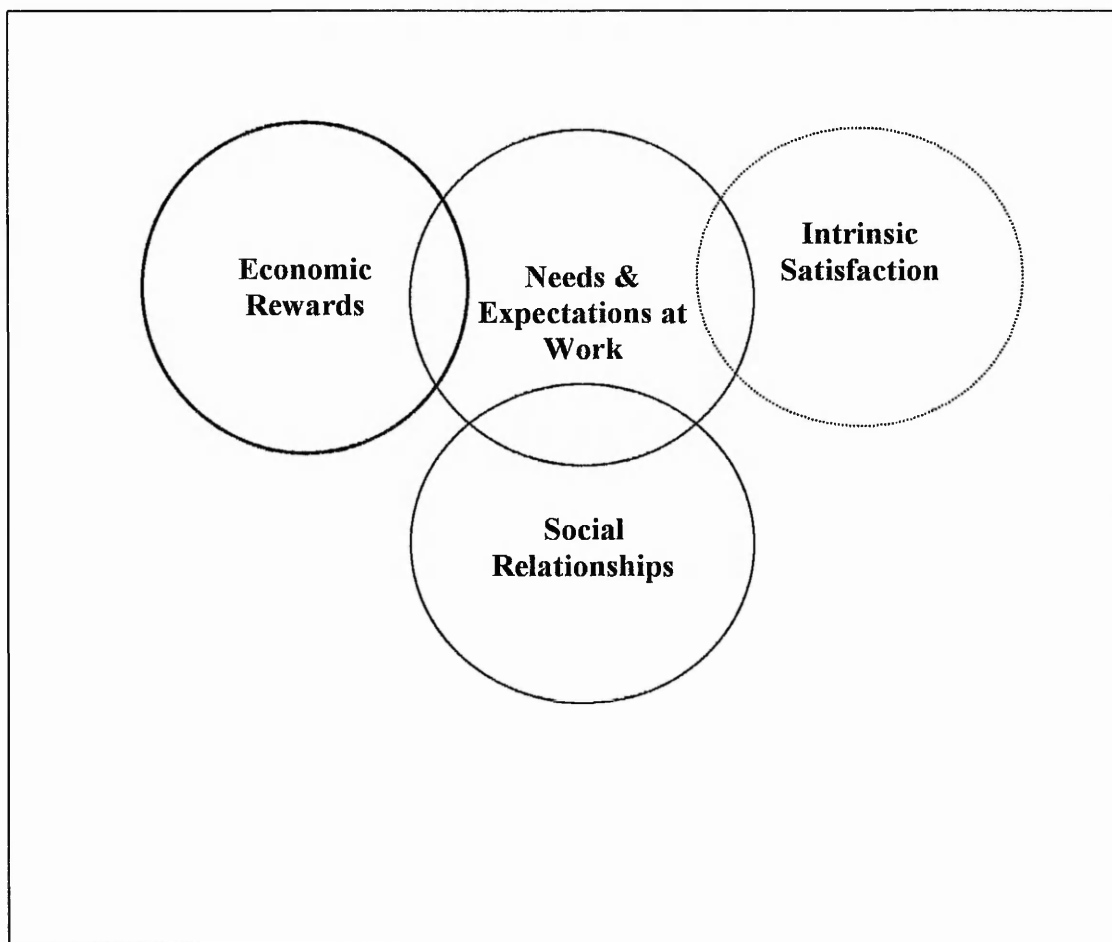


taken a national, case study level approach; for example, contributions to Baum's edited volume (1993b) and Brogan (1994). At the individual business level, Swarbrooke (1995) considers the management of human resources to be the most important aspect of the management of visitor attractions. His argument is two-fold: as discussed above, staff play a crucial role in the service delivery relationship and therefore directly affect visitor satisfaction (see also Baum, 1997).

## **2.9 Meeting motivations with Rewards**

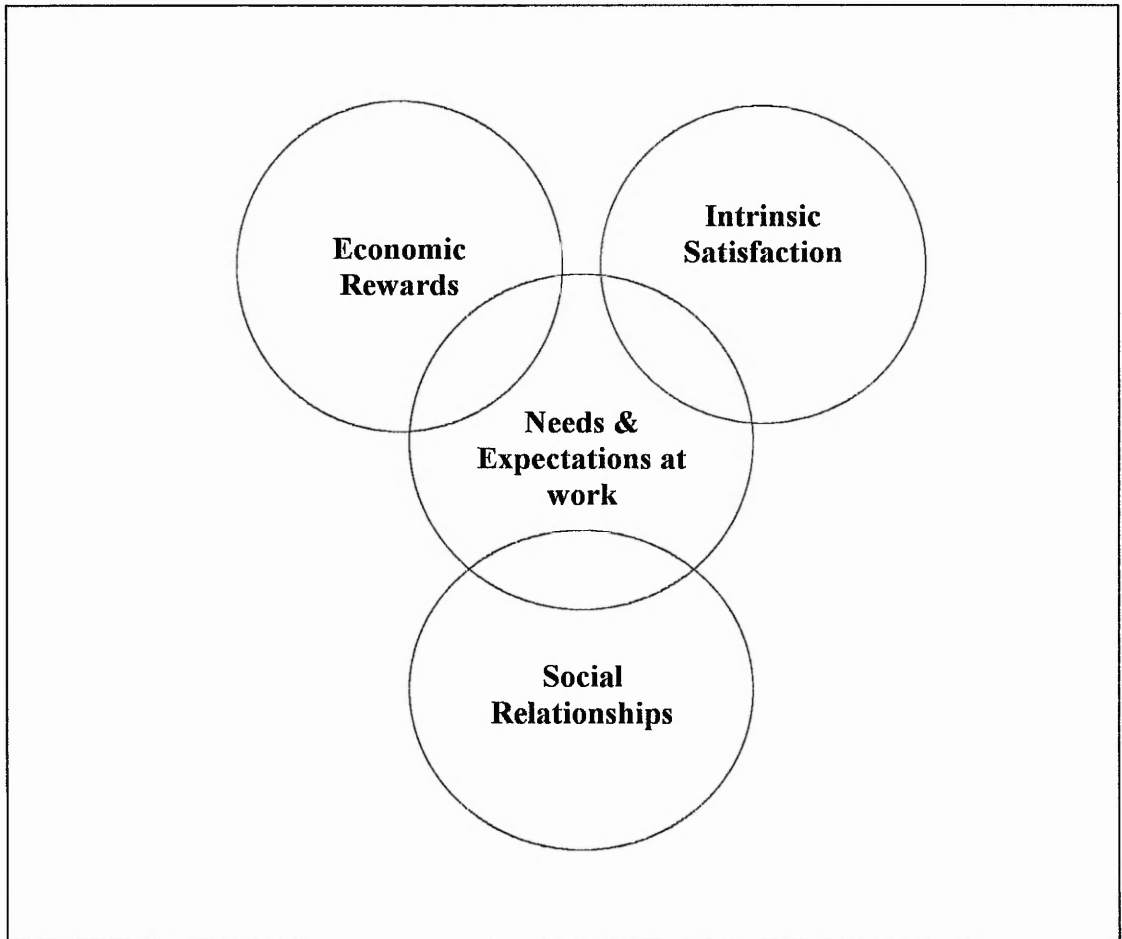
The link between motivation and reward can be illustrated by considering employee motivation literature and its division of the needs and expectations of work into physiological and social motivations, or into intrinsic and extrinsic motives (Mullins, 1996). Extrinsic motivations are related to tangible rewards such salary, fringe benefits and the work environment; intrinsic motivations are related to psychological rewards such as appreciation, recognition and a sense of challenge and achievement. Mullins presents these elements in a model of the motivations to work (Figure 1 & 2). In translating this to the tour-guiding situation, the direct economic rewards are key motivations. However, for a number of tour guides, the rewards are based on intrinsic elements derived from the nature of the work itself (such as brushing up languages or meeting with foreigners).

**Figure 1: Needs and Expectations of Tour Guides in Thailand**



Source: Modified from Mullins (1996)

**Figure 2: Needs and Expectations of Blue Badge Tour Guides in the UK**



Source: Modified from Mullins (1996)

### **2.10 Mix of Rewards**

The rewards derived from volunteering operate on different levels. For example, Davis Smith *et al* (1998) found that three inter-related groups of benefits resulted from unemployed people's voluntary activities: direct benefits (for example, opportunities for job seeking & networking; references; developing skills); indirect benefits (for example, developing confidence and motivation; transferable work skills; working with others); and the underlying benefits to both the individual and society (for example, contributing to the community; being useful).

This complex mix of rewards is confirmed by the findings of other volunteering surveys. Davis Smith (1998a) found that the most important benefits regular volunteers derived from their voluntary work were: the enjoyment they experience; the satisfaction of seeing results; meeting people and making friends; and a sense of personal achievement. As with motivations, volunteers will each have their own "personal agenda" (Millar, 1991b:22), although parallels can be drawn about the types of rewards that different sets of volunteers may value. For example, Dickens & Blomberg (1988) highlighted the capacity of voluntary work to indicate self-motivation and social skills to potential employers for women re-entering the workforce; and Davis Smith (1998a) found that young people (18-24) were more likely than older groups to see volunteering as a way of learning new skills, getting qualifications and achieving a position in the community. Mattingly (1984) found that museum volunteers similarly identified a mix of benefits, including: learning about the subject; using skills and learning new ones; making a contribution to the community; and meeting people with similar interests.

### **2.11 Importance of Recognition and Appreciation**

The study of volunteers' attitudes towards recognition indicates that recognition and appreciation can come from different sources, including: the organisation itself, its management, other volunteers and staff, and those that benefit from the volunteer's activities. Davis Smith (1998a) found that while only 37% of current volunteers felt that it was important for an organisation to give some form of recognition to its volunteers, 47% thought it was important to receive recognition from the people helped by their volunteering. The overwhelming majority (96%) said they had been helped by their volunteering. The overwhelming majority (96%) said they had been thanked by their organisation, with three quarters (71%) saying they had been thanked by those they had helped. Younger volunteers were much more likely than older ones to regard recognition as important, and were more critical of the recognition they received. This suggests that younger volunteers are a more demanding volunteer workforce.

In terms of methods of recognition, Davis Smith (1998a) found that more than a third of volunteers thought that the best way for an organisation to recognise their efforts was with a simple thank you, verbal or written. No other form of recognition was

supported by more than 7% of respondents, and 12% said that recognition was unnecessary anyway. Similarly, Gaskin & Davis Smith (1995) found that there was a variation in the rewards and benefits that were of value to different groups of volunteers, particularly in terms of age. For example, younger people were more interested than the older in learning new skills; social benefits were important to all ages, but especially older people.

## **2.12 Training**

In their review and handbook on museum training, Kilgour & Martin (1997:4) define training as: "...a process concerned with the acquisition or maintenance of capacity". Training is an important and ongoing factor for all staff, not just tour guides. This section will consider the need for, and implementation of, ongoing training. In his review of training and the voluntary sector, Osborne (1996) states that there has been little research into the training needs of volunteers, or volunteer co-ordinators. Nevertheless, training has been a focus of tour guide, largely because it is hoped to raise the standard of the practising and new tour guides.

## **2.13 The Significance of Tour Guide Training**

Appropriate training is central to enabling the new guide trainees to attain good basic guiding knowledge and skills required delivering quality service. In addition, training is part of the training organisation's commitment to their tour guide candidates. Training can also be an important benefit that tour guide trainees derive from their guide trainers or guide lecturers<sup>7</sup>. Tour guide training should be part of an organisation-wide training strategy (see also Kilgour & Martin, 1997), based on the assumption that "...every person who is active on behalf of the organisation can benefit from training" (Scott, 1994:249). In his discussion of 'the provision of learning support for non-employees', Walton (1996) emphasised the importance of training and educating non-employees<sup>8</sup> including tour guide which fall in this category since most of them are either self-employed or freelancers. This is particularly important for those working within the organisation who contribute to the 'primary value chain', i.e. the provision of front-line services: "Public perception of the

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<sup>7</sup> in the U.K., guide lecturers usually refer to experienced tour guides

performance of such front-line individuals is clearly central to the organisation's image and success in the marketplace, and considerable thought and attention should be given to their learning needs (Walton, 1996:132)".

The type and level of training required to undertake different tour guiding jobs varies widely (see also Wilson & Pimm, 1996). Ambrose (1993) stressed the importance of *appropriate* training: each tour guide has a different background and organisations need to establish the existing skills and qualifications of volunteers, identify where training support is required, and provide that support. Scott (1994) emphasised that a positive climate for training is essential if it is to succeed; those who feel forced into training are unlikely to benefit. Scott recommends the development of a cross-organisation training strategy, ensuring the support and acceptance of the benefits of training from all stakeholders.

## 2.14 Method of Training

As highlighted in section 5.5.1, there are a wide range of methods and people that can be involved in the training process. Training can be delivered both formally and informally, and provided internally by those within the organisation, or from external sources. Research by Park (1993) found the general population has a narrow understanding of 'training' and the activities it includes; most respondents focused on formal courses and did not include on-the-job learning by experience or informal training. Whilst Ambrose (1993) advocates that training should be carried out as far as possible 'on the job', Schmidt (1997:18) cautions against this on the grounds of minimising liability, recommending its use only when "...the nature of the position uniquely supports it *and* adequate supervision by a fully trained employee is available to provide basic instruction". In addition, this stresses the importance of 'training the trainers' to ensure the standard and effectiveness of a training programme. Authors also emphasise the importance of training those who manage and supervise volunteer (Ellis, 1986; Goodlad & McIvor, 1998; Kahn & Garden, 1994; Kuyper *et al*, 1993; MTI, 1993; Newbery, 1997; Scott *et al*, 1993; Wilson & Pimm, 1996). There are increasing methods of accrediting volunteer training, including National Vocational

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<sup>8</sup> Walton (1996:121) defines 'non-employees' as "...those individuals or groups who have some relationship with an organisation but are not in an employer-employee relationship". Other examples include the self-employed...

Qualifications (NVQs). In the 1997 National Survey of Volunteering (Davis Smith, 1998a), whilst 52% of volunteers said they were aware that accreditation of voluntary activities sometimes took place, only a minority of these (8%) had gained any qualifications through their volunteering.

Training is seen as an important issue across the experienced tour guides and guide lecturers, apart from the Tourism Authority of Thailand. For example, as argued by Johns (1991), training is central to achieving quality in service delivery and in particular bridging or narrowing the 'delivery gap' between visitors' expectations and their perceptions of the actual attraction quality.

One of the recommendations of Scott *et al*'s (1993) heritage workforce report was the need for further research into all aspects of heritage volunteer training. This has been followed up by, for example, the Carnegie UK Trust who sponsored a conference in 1995 on volunteers and visitor care which emphasised the important role of training (Coles *et al*, 1996).

### **2.15 Monitoring and Evaluation**

The relationship between an organisation and its tour guides should be the subject of continual monitoring, evaluation and review, both of the tour guides and of the programme itself. Connor (1993:3) adopts the following definitions in relation to evaluation by voluntary organisations, which may also be applied to evaluation of staff, including tour guides themselves: "Monitoring: the regular checking of progress against a plan through routine, systemic collection of information".

This section considers the monitoring and evaluation process and its feed-back into the earlier stages of the management process.

### **2.16 Evaluation**

Evaluation is an integral element in the success and vitality of a tour guide training programme (see also BAFM, 1999; Kuyper *et al*, 1993; Ortiz, 1988); it enables both the individual and the organisation to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of volunteers, their work and the programme itself. This can then direct the ongoing

review and revision of the programme. Evaluation should take place of both individual tour guides and of the programme itself.

### **2.17 Key Attributes of Tour Guides**

The tourism literature acknowledges the importance of tour guides in tourism. (Schmidt, 1979; Cohen, 1985; Dearden & Harron, 1992). The role and responsibility of tour guides in developing tourists' perceptions of the tourist product and achieving tourist satisfaction have been emphasised. Four roles of the tour guide, such as *organising and managing* (guiding), *facilitating interaction with the host community* (entertaining), *leading* (culture broker) and *educating* (teaching) have been identified and cited as a basis for analysing tour guide roles (Cohen, *ibid.*).

Since the tour guide 'throughout the tour's entire duration is in a continuous and intense contact with the tour participants' (Geva & Goldman, 1991: 178), s/he plays an important role in facilitating tourist-host interaction; providing security and protection for the tour participants when difficulties arise in the host country; and mediating the tourist-host interaction (Cohen, 1985; Holloway, 1981; Lopez, 1980; Pearce, 1982; Quiroga, 1990). The tour guide's job is to solve problems and provide tourists with information on where to go, what to see, where to buy and where to stay. The tour guide is usually perceived by tourists as an expert and source of information. It is reported that the information-giving role of a tour guide is very important (see Holloway, 1981; Hughes, 1991).

A tour guide is expected to have specific knowledge of the history, geography and cultural environment of the area being visited. (Almagor, 1985). Hughes, (1991, *ibid.*) also reports that the tour guide must possess an extensive knowledge not only of the country being visited, but also of the culture of the visitors. The tour guide is expected to be a culture broker (Holloway, *ibid.*) and to possess appropriate communication skills that enhance the tourists' experiences (Pearce, 1984, Cohen, 1979).

### **2.18 Tour Guides in Thailand and the UK: A Comparison Study**

Since the researcher has chosen Blue Badge tour guides training for a comparison study in this thesis, it is important to understand the types of tour guides existing in



both the UK and Thailand. Therefore, types of tour guides in the UK will be discussed following that of tour guides in Thailand.

### **2.18.1 Types of Tour Guides in Thailand**

The types of tour guides according to the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT Guide Training Manual 1997) can be classified as:

- *General guide* including National and Regional guide;
- *Specialist guide* including Trekking, Cultural, Coastal, Marine guide.

Different types of tour guides in Thailand can be described in details as follows:

**1. General guide** (covers a foreign-language and Thai-language guide) with two subdivisions:

- *National guide*: a guide accompanying local or foreign tourists to visitor attractions nation-wide who imparts knowledge regarding the places' history, arts, customs and tradition, archaeology, geography, etc. from the beginning of the excursion until returning.
- *Regional guide*: a guide performing a similar duty to a national but who can guide only in a particular region.

**2. Specialist guide** can be classified as follows:

- *Trekking guide* (or forest guide): a guide accompanying local or foreign tourists to forested areas who gives a commentary on local geography, wildlife, flowers and trees. This also covers white water rafting, climbing and boating.
- *Cultural guide*: a specialist guide whose commentary is primarily focused on aspects of history, archaeology, tradition and culture.

- *Coastal guide*: a guide whose comments are on marine aspects within an area not exceeding 40 miles from seashore and/or including the distance from the accommodation to the tourist spots on coastal areas. He or she should be knowledgeable about scuba diving, coral species, marine animals and ecology, and safety equipment used in or near the sea.
- *Marine guide*: a guide whose guiding duty is similar to a coastal guide but without any distance limitations.

Besides, tour guides of each category, in order to carry out their guiding job legally, need to wear guide ID card at all time while guiding. Generally, domestic tour guides wear bronze ID card whereas inbound tour guides wear a silver one.

However, in the UK, tour guides especially Blue Badge ones are classified into four different types. Details of which are illustrated below:

### **2.18.2 Types of Blue Badge Tour Guides in the UK**

Tour guides in the UK can be divided into four main groups namely:

- *Local guide*
- *National guide*
- *General guide*
- *Specialist guide*

The description of these are as follows:

#### **1. *Local guide*, having two meanings:**

- a guide who accompanies visitors during their visits to a particular site or small region of his country, giving information on culture, archaeology, history, religion, flora and fauna, etc., related to that particular area.

- a guide who gives information during a visit to a museum, monument or other site at which he or she is based.

**2. National guide** is a guide who gives information on the culture, archaeology, history, religion, flora and fauna of the whole of his country.

**3. General guide** is a guide who covers many types of tours such as city-sightseeing, excursions, general visits, e.g., to a museum or historical monument.

**4. Specialist guide** is a guide who covers visits to museums, archaeological or historical sites of which he or she has both a broad and detailed knowledge.

To sum up, guides in Thailand and UK Blue Badge guides have many things in common: they are under either *general* or *specialist* category. In Thailand, though, tour guides of each category have to be trained separately in order to receive different colour ID card accordingly; i.e., domestic and inbound tour guides wear different colour ID card and so do specialist guides depending on what area they are specialised in. This does not necessarily mean that general tour guides cannot be trained to be specialist guides. But in practice, few guides would wish to acquire both qualifications since they realise that to do well in both areas requires great effort and time to assimilate a vast amount of guiding knowledge.

However, for UK Blue Badge tour guides, it is possible for general guides, if they wish, to do self-study focusing on a specific area of interest, i.e., history or archaeology, in order to become specialist guides. Usually, a number of Blue Badge tour guides have the ability to be both general and specialist guides, since they have undertaken a stringent guide training course with a reasonably long period of time for 2 years. Thus it enables them to comfortably do a guiding job in both areas, especially after their experience has built up.

## 2.19 Genders and Guiding

However, most tour guides find that they are able to do all these kinds of jobs as their experience and knowledge grows. Interestingly, in the UK, out of approximately

2,000 Blue Badge tourist guides, nearly 75 per cent are female guides. By comparison, of Thailand's roughly 8,000 (TAT 1998 tour guide statistics) tourist guides (excluding guides using only the Thai language), approximately 50 per cent are female, an increase from 20-25 per cent from the early phase of guide training.

A study on tour guides' profile (Orde, 1993) suggests that countries such as Austria (which has a long tourist season the same as London) has 80 per cent female, whereas Greece has 90 per cent female. On the contrary, the following countries have more male tourist guides than female ones (although no exact overall number of tour guides available) : Israel has 75 per cent male guides, while Japan and Nepal have 83 per cent and 96 per cent male guides respectively. The reason that some countries have more female guides is presumably linked both with the length of tourist season and opportunities to make a living, and the pay differential between men and women in each country.

## **2.20 Key Characteristics of Effective Guides**

An effective tour guide must be dynamic and versatile in their commentary to the tourists. The presentation or explanation has to be adjusted according to the tourists' backgrounds because the nature of tourists varies. Some want a light commentary; others want a comprehensive one. Therefore, it is important that a tour guide must be able to give a "balanced" commentary. One of the examples is between tourists of different nationalities; Chinese tourists visiting Thailand are less interested in tourist attractions dialogue than in good eating and shopping places, whereas the European tourists (especially French) pay serious attention to a detailed knowledge of the places visited. So effective tour guides should be flexible and well prepared to cope with their tour participants.

One of the most vital elements in the making of a successful guide is that he/she should have a friendly and cheerful personality to make tourists feel at ease. A guiding career is one of very few service jobs which requires an outgoing personality, enthusiasm and a capability to get the messages across. Most people, particularly foreign tourists, expect their ideal tour guide to be caring, enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Certainly the best guides have a combination of these positive

personality traits. A certain number of particular traits are significant and desirable for qualified guides (Pond, 1993) namely:

- *Enthusiasm*: This is the single most important characteristic of successful guides and cannot be taught or learned in any traditional sense. Above all, it enables guides to give a commentary confidently and thus to create a favourable impression with their tourists.
- *Outgoing*: Though guides are expected to be approachable, open and comfortable in various circumstances and with different tourists' requirements, different perspectives prevail. One school of thought believes that individuals with highly introverted or non-public personalities should be actively discouraged; the other maintains that introverts can survive -even thrive- in guiding. It further adds that shy individuals often 'come alive' in front of a group. Guides must have the ability to be friendly, to initiate a conversation and to encourage their tourists to do the same.
- *Self-confidence and proactive nature*: This virtue of self-confidence helps guides to project themselves well, thus their commentary will hold their tourists' interest, and their proactive behaviour significantly contributes to success in guiding because guides must be able to assume leadership and responsibility in unforeseen situations.
- *Sensibility and flexibility*: In short, guides must be considerate, caring, respectful, tactful, and observant. They must be sensitive to people's needs and understand other's perspectives. Flexibility will help them to easily adjust themselves to difficult people and situations, particularly when the itinerary needs alteration.
- *Appearance and sense of humour*: It is true that most tourists' first impression is generally based upon their guides' physical appearance, and assume that if they look clean and well-groomed, their

performance will be interesting and competent. Guides with a good sense of humour can bring tourists closer together, making their journey easier and more enjoyable. A large number of tourists who like to laugh and relax will certainly appreciate guides who have a sense of humour.

Though the above qualifications are essential elements for successful tour guides, people who possess them do not automatically become good tour guides unless they have a systematic training. It is not surprising; however, that people with these traits have a very good potential to be excellent guides. But for those who do not have all of the above qualities, the author believes that they can be trained to attain such qualifications as long as they are ready and willing to work hard.

### **2.21 Nature of Tour Guiding**

Due to the seasonal nature of tourism, tour operators do not generally hire full-time tourist guides. In Thailand, tour operators have lists of guides who are considered “old hands” whom they could contact when required, or request guiding service from the Professional Guide Association of Thailand (PGAT) who can immediately provide them with a considerable number of its members.

In the UK, guide employers also have some “old hands” readily available. The Guild of Guide Lecturers (GGL) have also distributed a booklet and guide list to tour operators, hotels, embassies, etc. to make it easier for Blue Badge guides’ prospective employers. Successful tourist guides with business initiatives have established guide booking agencies to offer guiding services to interested parties, particularly to tour operators or prospective customers.

### **2.22 Shared Characteristics**

Therefore, it is appropriate to say that the majority of tourist guides in both countries (as well as others) share a common characteristic in that they are free-lance and self-employed people. They come from all walks of life: teachers, office workers, housewives, nurses, taxi drivers, policemen, soldiers, etc. and, especially those in the UK, regard guiding as their second income. Briefly, there are two main motivations for people who are taking on guiding job, namely income and job satisfaction.

### 2.23 Conclusion

Since the beginning of travel and tourism, the objective of earlier travellers' excursion was primarily searching for food and proper shelter and those who led their ways were referred to as pathfinders (Pond, 1993). According to a tourism author, tour guides of the olden times largely assumed the role of the pathfinders or geographical tour guides who directed their tour participants to unfamiliar environments (Cohen, 1985). With different names, i.e. bear leaders, proxemos and cicerones, these pathfinders were believed to be antecedents of the present day's tour guides (Pond, op.cit.). However, those businessmen travelling in those days for trading spices, silver and gold purpose also hired those tour guides to escort and protect them from thieves and undesirable people. Therefore, it is fair to say that guiding is among the world's oldest profession as tour guides' accounts had been recorded since the travel of mankind.

Later, after the basic needs were satisfied, people started to travel to see more of the world, to: "...represent and protect their territories, to align themselves with others, out of sheer curiosity and for pleasure". Worth noting is that these types of travels, the Grand Tours, seemed to be restricted to the well-heeled and privilege people of the 14-18 centuries, and tour guides of those days played a significant role as mentors to the young aristocrats. Through the Roman Empire, the Middle ages, Renaissance and the modern age, tour guides have, however, garnered a mixed reputation both negatively and positively, such as charlatans, opportunists and nuisances. Despite this, another tourism author put it that tour guides of today still could not improve their image (Casson, 1974).

Tour guides are often regarded as unofficial ambassadors of their own country and thus are expected to act as representatives of their town, region and country as a whole. However, one must not forget that tour guides, at the same time, have to represent both themselves and their company.

Ironically speaking, while tour guides are given much credit by travel agents/tour operators for "making or breaking" the tour, they are not paid as well as they are supposed to be. Worth noting is that tour guides in Thailand have received a relatively low going rate or guiding fee. Consequently, they tend to resort to additional income,

i.e. a commission from tourism-related businesses to compensate for their insufficient earnings during the off-peak tourist season.

Comparatively, the Blue Badge tour guides in the UK have earned a relatively high going rate for their guiding. Interestingly, a number of them are also freelancers, and some are self-employed whose guiding job is a second income. In the UK, it is discovered that most Blue Badge guides taking a guiding job enjoy meeting people. It is not only the financial returns that inspire them to become tour guides, but the nature of the job is not a routine one.

Arguably, one of tour guides' key motivations in taking a guiding job is the fact that they could have a job within which they can have a considerable autonomy, which constitutes to high level of job satisfaction. To most of them, a guiding job is very exciting since they never know what types of tourists they are going to accompany and where they are going to take them to. Holloway (1979)'s study found that a sense of achievement and fulfilment once the trip ends and their tourists giving compliments is also an important inspiring factor

A guiding job, by its very nature, is a very high pressured job because tour guides have to dedicate themselves by sacrificing virtually all their time, including family and other social commitments to their guiding responsibilities. They frequently have to work seven days a week in peak season in order to compensate for the off-peak one. It is inevitable that their personality is gradually affected with the result that they become "hard" people due to the stress and strain from such work.

With each passing year, more and more people are travelling, a trend that begins after the World War II when transportation became more advanced and comfortable. People in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century live longer and have more disposable income and discretionary time to take more holidays. The majority of tourists (especially those who are mass tourists travelling on a package tour) will come into contact with tour guides and be accompanied while visiting a foreign country. It is virtually impossible to visit another country without encountering tour services (Fine and Spear, 1985).



Tourists generally appreciate the significance of their tour guide and realise that he or she could potentially make holidays more pleasant and enjoyable, particularly when they are being taken care of and looked after by a qualified and well trained guide. It is not surprising that in countries whose standard of tour guide training is very high, tour guides are more versatile and knowledgeable.

## Chapter 3

### Roles of Tour Guides

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**This chapter focuses on the study of various roles of tour guides while guiding, as well as their responsibilities and dedication towards their visitors. The effect of tour guides' honesty and sincerity in their commentary in different situations on their audience is explored. Besides, codes of ethics and tour guide's representation are extensively studied and discussed.**

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#### 3.1 Introduction

The tourism literature has acknowledged the importance of tour guides in tourism (see Schmidt, 1979; Cohen, 1985; Dearden & Harron, 1992). The role and responsibility of tour guides in developing tourists' perceptions of the tourist product and achieving tourist satisfaction have been emphasised. Four roles of the tour guide, such as *organising and managing* (guiding), *facilitating interaction with the host community* (entertaining), *leading* (culture broker) and *educating* (teaching) have been identified and cited as a basis for analysing tour guide roles (Cohen, *ibid.*).

In the last chapter, the researcher has covered tour guides' profiles and human resource management. This chapter will attempt to introduce different roles of tour guides and their implications.

#### 3.2 The Significance of Tour Guides' Roles in Tourism

Since the tour guide 'throughout the tour's entire duration is in a continuous and intense contact with the tour participants' (Geva and Goldman, 1991: 178), s/he plays

an important role in facilitating tourist-host interaction; providing security and protection for the tour participants when difficulties arise in the host country; and mediating the tourist-host interaction (Cohen, 1985; Holloway, 1981; Lopez, 1980; Pearce, 1982; Quiroga, 1990). The tour guide's job is to solve problems and provide tourists with information on where to go, what to see, where to buy and where to stay. Weiler and Davis (1993) recognise the vital role of the tour leader in contributing not only to a quality tourist experience, but also to an environmentally and socially responsible tourist experience. Weiler et al. (1990) have identified the need for better understanding of tour guide's roles and the need for better tour guide training.

### **3.3 Tour Guides' Responsibility**

According to Taft (1977), a tour guide can protect many travellers from difficulties encountered in the host country. Schmidt (1979) has noted that tour groups are popular among overseas tourists because they remove the interaction difficulties of the tourists. He has also emphasised the role of a tour guide in providing authentic experiences for tourists. Hughes (1991) points out that a tour guide's competence and organisational skills are important in ensuring the successful running of guided tours. Based on Gronroos (1978), the tour guide's job is to maintain the tour's quality and keep the tour participants satisfied. Similarly, Hughes (1991) has noted that a tour guide's ability to fulfil tourists' requirements influences tourists' evaluation of the entire tour and, consequently, determines tourist holiday satisfaction. Hughes (op.cit.) also indicates determinants of tourists' satisfaction with a guided tour in North Queensland, Australia. Of particular importance to their satisfaction was the ability of the tour guide to provide an interesting and informative commentary, to interact with the tour group participants, to know the culture visited, to understand the visitor and to possess organisational skills.

### **3.4 Tour Guides and Customer Service**

The concept of customer service refers directly to the interaction between the customer and the service provider, or as Bitner *et al* (1990) has pointed out, the interpersonal element of service performance. The quality of this interaction plays an important role in the assessment of service. According to Crompton and MacKay (1989), the quality of service depends on the service attributes. These refer to the service providers' friendliness, attentiveness, politeness and competence, and are

important determinants of the quality of customer/service-provider interaction. The quality of the customer/service-provider contact is critical for the development of the customer's perceptions of the services provided. *The services provided by tour guides are particularly high-contact services.* Therefore, the quality of the interaction between tourists and tour guides, the tour guides' attributes and service performance are crucial for the assessment of services provided, the development of tourist perceptions of the tour quality and, consequently, tourists' satisfaction with their holiday.

### 3.5 Different Roles of Tour Guides

The roles of tour guides can be perceived differently depending on the critiques' personal experience and background. Even among tour guides themselves, different and contradictory views usually occur. Pond (1993) has interestingly explored roles of tour guides and suggested the roles of tour guides can be classified as leader, educator, public relations, host and conduit. Details of tour guides' roles are further discussed below:

- *Leader:* Guides are generally the first people to meet the tourists upon arriving the places or countries visited, and accompany them through to the end of their journey. In this respect, most tour operators consider leadership the vital part of a guide's responsibilities. They are often more concerned with a guide's effectiveness with people and ability to lead the group than with a guide's experience and knowledge.
- *Educator:* A tourist guide is certainly in a position to give tourists knowledge and information about places visited, cultures and local people's way of life. If travel is a classroom and tourists are students, then a guide is an educator.
- *Public Relations:* In some countries, guides are used by governments to work as spokespersons. This practice also applies to many businesses and organisations that employ guides specifically for the

purpose of presenting a particular message or image to visitors. As government employees, those guides are even trained to respond in specific ways to controversial or probing issues, and the most dutiful rarely stray from these responses. Though this is less common in democratic countries, guides employers can, and often do, exert authority over what the guide might or might not say.

- *Host*: A good host enjoys people and has a seemingly innate ability to create an environment in which people feel comfortable and enjoy themselves. In addition, a good host is sensitive to other's needs and brings out the best in people, at the same time a good host is relaxed with, and energised by, people.
- *Conduit*: The guide's role as a conduit is perhaps his/her most important because it cannot be separated from any other role, and it is integral to all guide functions. In this role, guides act as facilitators to allow and encourage events to unfold. It is the innate understanding of when to be silent, when to step back, when to encourage and when to move on.

Despite representation issue, the roles of tour guides include:

- *A commentator* who has to impart knowledge and facts.
- *An entertainer* who has to be interesting, relaxing, enjoyable.
- *A teacher* who has to explain and interpret (especially to certain groups, e.g. children or students).
- *A trouble shooter* who has to deal with the unexpected.
- *A controller* who has to manage groups and move them round tourist sights. on and off coaches, etc.

- *A salesperson* who has to promote other tours.
- *An Information centre* who has to answer questions on various and different topics such as sports, entertainment facilities, etc.

Nevertheless, in a real guiding scenario, only tour guides themselves realise how different circumstances dictate different roles. It is unlikely that they will wear only "one" hat at a time; more often they have to perform different roles simultaneously. The tour guide's role is multifaceted depending upon the region, the nature of the group and the nature of the excursion.

### **3.6 Role Behaviour or Role Performance?**

Some guides believe that their priority roles are educators, commentators, and entertainers; others maintain that theirs are mediators, interpreters, and above all, ambassadors. One thing guides agree upon is that sometimes they have to play different roles simultaneously due to several factors such as the tourists' age group, common interests, and socio-economic backgrounds. Holloway (1979: 36) has suggested that:

"The guiding role itself is composed of a number of sub-roles, some of which may give rise to intra-role conflict. The role incumbent is not the occupant of a position for which there is a neat set of rules, but in himself modifying and interpreting his role to make aspects of it implicit, a process".

Holloway (ibid.) has further quoted Turner as suggesting that a tour guiding role is both role taking and role making. Tour guides' roles cover: information and knowledge giver; teacher or instructor; motivator and initiator into the rites of touristic experience; missionary or ambassador for one's country; entertainer or catalyst for the group; confidant, shepherd and ministering angel; and group leader and disciplinarian. However, it is argued that these roles may be in conflict, i.e. the need to discipline the tour participants may be in conflict with the role of confidant, or even the desire to impart knowledge and information may be frustrated by the need to entertain a group

of revelry-makers unwilling to be informed. It is also pointed out that the way tour guides resolve these conflicts depends upon their perspective of the job, which in turn may derive from the diverse backgrounds of the guides. Role behaviour may well differ from role performance.

### **3.7 Tour Guides' Roles and Demanding Tourists**

Nowadays people all over the world seem to travel more often for various purposes and motivations (Dann, 1981; Cooper *et al*, 1993). This is largely due to technological advancement and transportation improvement, in addition to having more opportunity, discretionary time and disposable income (Tourist-receiving countries need to well equip and project themselves in the global tourism in order to attract more visitors whose expenditure can significantly contribute to the well being of the country and its people. Tourists who become more experienced as tourists are much more demanding, with high expectations, and they know what they are looking for (Shackley, 1994).

As time goes by, it seems that the desires and needs of visitors are becoming increasingly complicated due to the rapid changes in all societies of the world in terms of economy, politics and technologies. Thus it is not surprising that educated tourists nowadays have very high expectations of their tour guides to satisfy them, as Shackley (1994) has rightly suggested that experienced tourists will become more demanding than those inexperienced. Tour guides are often challenged when conducting a tour of expert or specialist groups, as experienced by a tour guide (see chapter five and six: tour guide training in the UK and Thailand, respectively), who admitted that she was rather frightened when she had to show a group of experts around, because she was quite inexperienced then. But she smoothly completed her trip to the satisfaction of the group of experts largely because she assumed the role of a knowledge receiver. What she had done most of the time was merely to initiate a topic and immediately ask for their opinion. That did not mean that she had not acted as a guide because she also told them some relevant anecdotes.

### 3.8 Roles of Tour Guides in Thailand

However, in Thailand, most guides have been trained to perceive their roles (Pongsabutre & Pongsabutre, 1993) as:

- *A teacher*
- *A psychologist*
- *An entertainer, and*
- *An ambassador*

These four main roles are briefly described as follows:

- *Teacher:* Tour guides are supposed to explain to their visitors various things related to man-made and natural attractions, apart from answering questions. Thus it is important that they should be knowledgeable enough to impart their knowledge to their visitors the same way as a teacher do to students.
- *Psychologist:* Tour guides must be able to effectively deal with tourists who are from diverse backgrounds. Some may be interested in knowing arts and local culture in depth, whereas others are just interested in light and non-academic commentary. Thus they should know their tourists' psychology in order to balance their commentary accordingly.
- *Entertainer:* Tour guides have to enhance their visitors' travelling experience. They must be able to create a lively and relaxing atmosphere so that the tourists will feel at ease, to bring them closer to one another, and



- *Ambassador*: Tour guides are supposed to represent their country and give a strong view in as much a positive way as possible to create good image and good impression. They must be aware all the time what they should and should not say to avoid any misunderstanding or undesirable consequences, and tourists should be encouraged to have a better understanding towards the three major pillars of Thailand, which are the unity of the nation, the Royal Family and the national religion.

The researcher would argue that the above-mentioned roles of tour guides are unfortunately rather limited in scope and responsibility. Clearly, such roles are widely accepted by most Thai tour guides, especially the buzz word "cultural ambassador". Nonetheless, these roles are comparatively narrow in dimension when compared with those of the Blue Badge tour guides.

As visitors are getting more sophisticated and demanding, tour guides' roles cannot be exhaustive. Professional tour guides have to be very dynamic and receptive to their visitors' needs. Therefore, it is fair to say that tour guides are expected to meet the unexpected everyday. The author wants to point out that, for tour guides, to know all their possible roles is one thing; to implement all of those roles is another.

### **3.9 Tour Guide's Ethics**

Though there is a cliché that "a tour guide makes or breaks the tour", it has been widely agreed that well trained guides will always make the tour (Pond, 1993). One of the key factors contributing to successful tours is that a guide must be both professional and service-minded.

Based on the "Code of Guiding Practice" which was put forward by the World Federation of Tourist Guide Lecturers Associations, a tour guide is supposed to observe the following guidelines:

- To provide a reliable service to visitors, be reliable in care and commitment, and reliable in providing a good understanding of the place visited, free from prejudice or propaganda;
- To take care that as far as possible what is presented as fact is true, and that a clear distinction is made between this truth and stories, legends, traditions or opinions;
- To act fairly and reasonably in all dealings with those engaging the services of guides in the travel trade and with colleagues working in all aspects of tourism;
- To protect the reputation of tourism in the country by making every endeavour to ensure that guided groups treat with respect the environment, wildlife, sites and monuments, and also local customs and sensitivities ;
- To welcome visitors and act in such a way as to bring credit to the country visited and promote it as a tourist destination, as a representative of the host country

By its very nature, a tour-guiding career demands a considerable responsibility and dedication. With a considerable pressure from various types of visitors and working conditions, tour guides who lack caring attitudes and efficiency would find that "making the tour" "is not an easy task.

However, successful tour guides are clearly those who enjoy meeting people from different parts of the world and taking good care of them - not merely out of responsibility, but with pleasure and enthusiasm, and making this obvious to the visitor with more of an attitude of welcoming than selling.

### **3.10 Who Should Tour Guides Represent?**

Though tour guides are supposed to give a vivid and truthful view of their country to overseas visitors in as positive and honest a way as possible, the most challenging question is: Could tour guides possibly produce a balanced viewpoint in every circumstance? How realistic is it for them to be genuinely honest in giving a commentary in every situation? In practice, it is very difficult to give a balanced view point, particularly for new tour guides. But it is not too difficult for well trained and experienced ones who could tactfully and diplomatically handle those critical situations (see chapter Nine).

### **3.11 Tour Guides' Representations**

Undoubtedly, qualified and efficient tour guides can make a considerable contribution to the tourism industry of their country in several ways. By representing the country, region, or city and getting the information across as constructively and genuinely as possible, a guide will certainly enlighten and impress the overseas tourists, thus a good image of the country is created and publicised. Consequently, those favourably impressed tourists are more likely to re-visit, since it is certain that visitors having been well informed, looked after and entertained by their tour guide would take home a pleasant experience and pass on their experiences by word of mouth to their family and friends.

### **3.12 Tour Guides' Stance**

It has always been a controversial issue regarding what stance guides should take when they are conducting tours. They have been expected to be their own country's representatives or "unofficial ambassadors". Thus they should preserve and maintain the country's image by portraying positive aspects of their countries as best as they can. While conducting tours, guides may occasionally be asked difficult to answer questions by groups of tourists who have different interests and backgrounds. Some might raise questions which make them reluctant to respond, particularly those considered personal or sensitive issues.

### **3.13 Tour Operators' Considerations**

Many travel agents/tour operators in Thailand forbid their guides to comment on sensitive matters, i.e. politics, religion, or chronic national problems. They have

advised their guides that if those delicate matters are raised, they must take a neutral stance by simply giving a brief general account of those issues and refrain from criticising or giving any personal opinion in order to avoid triggering controversy or misunderstanding. Guides are supposed to represent their countries in a positive manner to impress the tourists and create or improve their countries' images.

It is a widely held view (see also chapter nine) from practising tour guides that tour guides have to represent many organisations, apart from themselves. For example, they are supposed to represent coach companies or tour operators, and have to show their loyalty to their employers and maintain the image of their company. They also represent their country, region or city as a whole.

### **3.14 Implications of Tour Guides' Self Representation**

Realistically speaking, tour guides should take their own stance and have full freedom in commenting or giving personal opinions on all subject matters. Visitors know that every country has problems and may be interested to know their causes and implications, and guides should take this opportunity to clarify and enlighten them. Nevertheless, the appropriate approaches are needed to address certain sensitive issues and should be carefully employed.

### **3.15 Is Honesty the Best Policy?**

However, guides must be aware that 'honesty is the best policy', since in the era of global information technology, concealing the facts is virtually impossible. Distorted or inaccurate accounts given could only aggravate the situation. Interestingly, freelance guides tend to express their opinion more independently than the others who have to follow the companies' rules or policies. They are representing themselves and have much more freedom to deal with various questions. They know that giving their own genuine comments or sincere opinions will be highly appreciated by their tourists and thus good rapport is easily established.

Though tour guides agree that they are supposed to give a strong view of their country to overseas visitors, and should represent a country in as much positive way and in an honest manner as possible, some has admitted that it is very difficult to present a well-thought viewpoint on sensitive issues concerning social, political or economic

problems. Tour guides appreciate that should they make a good impression on their visitors as individual guides; their tourists will praise them to their tour operators at home, and when the foreign tour operators send more tourists they will request that particular guide again. Most importantly, tour guides must represent themselves if they want to impress their visitors.

### **3.16 Tour Guide and Visitors' Travelling Experience**

However, the notion of tour guides' employers is that their tour guides have to keep the tour participants relaxed and entertained because the visitors are likely to revisit if they are impressed by their tour guides, the facilities for relaxation and enjoyment (see also chapter nine).

The researcher wants to point out that, to some extent, it is true that some groups of visitors, especially those who are from oriental countries might be more interested in ideal places for shopping, entertaining or eating than details of historical sites or academic-related information of sites visited. Encountering these types of visitors, tour guides' first priority is to give a brief commentary and to entertain my visitors. It is necessary for tour guides to give a commentary on selected topics in a favourable light. Though some tour guides may not go into too many details but tell jokes or anecdotes which seem to please many tourists, instead (see chapter Nine).

It is no doubt that visitors are concerned with a good-value-for-money excursion trip that has an efficient tour guide, who is able to satisfactorily response to their diversified requirements. In all scenarios, tour guides are obliged to put their shows to the best of their ability.

### **3.17 Are Tour Guides Ambassadors of the Country?**

Since guides are in the forefront of the visitor experience, they are expected to represent their country in many ways and to portray various aspects to tourists of different countries.

Ironically speaking, they are also called *(un) official ambassadors* of their own country to imply how important they are, which is supposed to make them proud of themselves for such high credibility given to them. Tour guide training organisers

believe that tour guides have a significant role to play, in particular a dignity and honourable representative to their country since to be a guide is like an ambassador of the host country. This is an honourable job and responsibility, which tour guides should be proud of. Therefore, good tour guides must not negatively criticise their own country, and should describe everything to tourists in as a most positive way as possible (see also chapter nine).

However, some tour guides may feel embarrassed to be labelled as ambassadors of their own country. They would rather be perceived as an ordinary representative of their country because they think it is too grand to say that a guide is like an ambassador. Besides, as tour guides, they have to work very hard but the remuneration and recognition is not in line with the huge responsibility they have. And if their role is important as such, then the guiding fees must justify such credibility and recognition (see also chapter nine).

Undoubtedly, tour guides' roles and representations have different influences on various groups of visitors and the impacts vary from one nationality to another. Tour guides must be culturally aware of the interest of their tour participants even those coming from the same country, who may have different educational, economical social and political, backgrounds. To give a commentary without considerations of these key elements would simply cause undesirable results.

### **3.18 Tour Guides and Visitors: A Relationship Gap**

The study on "From museum to morgue? Electronic guides in Roman Bath" (Walter, 1996) suggests that after the introduction of electronic guides to the Roman Baths Museum, visitors tended to have less interaction with their human-guided tours. Hence visitor experience becomes more private, less sociable and friendly. The approach similar to the above study is widely adopted in many countries' museum, cathedrals, especially in the UK, including other tourist attractions. Especially 'Guide Friday' s doubled-decked buses with open roofed top as well as other identical recording-commentary bus services in several major touristic cities around the U.K.

The researcher wants to draw a parallel between the outcome of the study above and that of the visitors who are escorted by their tour guides. The clear distinction between

the two approaches is that, in the case of an electronic guided tour, visitors have less interaction with others; whereas in the case of a human guided tour, visitor experience is significantly enhanced owing to more interaction with other tourists as well as with their tour guides.

Many tour guides are aware that the relationship built up while showing their visitors around is very significant. The visitors may register compliments or complaints once they are back home with their tour operators; thus those guides are more likely to be requested time and again or not, as the case may be. It is no doubt that tour guides who are appreciated by most tourists are usually efficient and honest.

### **3.19 Tour Guides' Autonomy**

As discussed earlier, it is obvious that a part-time guide or a free-lance guide is in a better position in freely expressing their views and commentaries, since the majority of them tend to be more independent and adventurous due to the nature of their assignment, and because his or her work varies. For example, one day he or she may work with a group of dairy farmers from New Zealand, and then the next day would work with a group of businessmen from America. For those guides, things can be different from day to day, whereas the full-time guides may repeat their work time and time again.

### **3.20 Tour Guides' Dilemma**

It is not an unusual practice for tour guides in certain countries to avoid touching on negative aspects of their own countries, especially in China and the former USSR.

Reisinger (1994: 747) pointed out that:

"The tour guide's role is to present the host community in the best light and to hide "uncomfortable" information from tourists".

However, it is doubtful that this give those countries a genuine advantage in the long run, or that visitors really believe everything that is told to them by their tour guides?

Pond (1993) has pointed out that a large number of visitors are educated people and would easily forgive an admission of ignorance rather than a lie from their tour

guides. Most visitors understand that every country has its own deficiencies but expect sincere commentary to enlighten them from their guide, who might be the only person they know to rely on. Tour guides are generally expected by governments, tourism enterprises and other parties concerned to maintain and preserve the country's image and reputation. Clearly, guides in less democratic countries have few alternatives in terms of freedom of speech and security; their performance is closely controlled and monitored by their governments.

### **3.21 The Best Approaches**

Tour guides in most developing countries seem to have more problematic commentary delivered than those in developed ones. This is not surprising since developing countries are usually prone to having social, economic and political problems. Therefore, while escorting overseas visitors around, provocative questions posed by interested or inquisitive tour participants are unavoidable. Therefore, one challenging question is: What approach should tour guides in Thailand adopt if their visitors ask questions about sensitive issues, such as Aids, drugs, child prostitution, child labour abuses, corruption...etc. How are they going to react to these questions?

### **3.22 Experienced and Inexperience's Solution**

It is most likely that experienced tour guides could handle these questions better than the inexperienced ones as witnessed by the researcher during his participative observation made in Thailand on a coach tour. When such questions were raised, those experienced tour guides had no difficulties in tackling them by briefly explaining as objectively and sincerely as possible the causes of the problems. Some other tour guides may adopt different approaches. No matter how they respond to such challenging questions, they should always bear in mind that sincerity and honesty is always the best guideline and, most importantly, their answer must not lead to visitors' feeling that they are protecting their country's image through telling lies.

Despite tour guides' discussion of sensitive matters with their tour participants is not usually encouraged by their employers, a number of tour guides strongly feel that they also represent themselves and thus should have their own opinion. However, it is always wise to always make it clear at the outset that their opinions or any comments made are subjectively and purely personal ones. Some tour guides may strictly follow



the company's instruction because they also believe that to avoid answering these kinds of questions is good for their security and the country as a whole.

### **3.23 Tour Guides' Awareness**

However, it is important that tour guides must always be aware that visitors' main objective in travelling is to relax and enjoy themselves. Therefore tour guides' first priority is to entertain their tour participants, to make them laugh and have fun. If they are asked controversial questions, tour guides must refrain from answering. Some travel agents/tour operators have instructed their tour guides to observe the company's policy forbidding any discussion or giving personal opinion on debatable topics. Most importantly, their tour guides' only responsibility is to make their visitors enjoy themselves and impress them with local culture and beautiful attractions (see also chapter Nine).

It is interesting to note that a thoughtful opinion is concurred with by several experienced tour guides, who also feel that it is more appropriate for tour guides to avoid controversial issues, because the answers to these questions would hardly please anyone. A case in point is when a UK Blue Badge guide once conducted a tour group from France to a nuclear power plant in a small town in Scotland not long after the "Chernobyl Disaster" took place. After giving a commentary on the nuclear plant, she was asked what she thought about the disaster. Realising that how delicate and sensitive this matter was, she simply smiled and thanked them for their interesting question, but she sincerely said that she was very sorry that because she was not qualified to answer the question (see chapter nine).

However, other tour guides may take a different approach. No matter what approach they take in addressing sensitive issues, their visitors should be made to feel that their questions are taken seriously, that their guide is answering their questions with genuine enthusiasm, honesty and sincerity.

### **3.24 Conclusion**

Cohen (1985) maintains that contemporary tour guides emerged from the pathfinders who were originally local people with a good native knowledge of their home environment but with no specialised training. These local people or local youths can

still be found and hired as pathfinders by travellers in some remote areas of the world, such as in the hill-tribe villages of Northern Thailand. From Cohen's research (*ibid.*); however, the role of the mentor, or personal tutor or spiritual advisor is much more complex in origin, heterogeneous in nature and difficult to trace historically. Cohen's study (*ibid.*) also concluded that: "The role of the modern tourist guide combines and expands from both antecedents, that of the pathfinders and that of the mentors".

Despite tour guides have various roles to play, they are usually perceived by their tour participants as experts and sources of knowledge and information. It is reported that the information-giving role of tour guides is very important (see Holloway, 1981; Hughes, 1991). A tour guide is expected to have specific knowledge of the history, geography and cultural environment of the area being visited. (Almagor, 1985). Hughes, (1991 *ibid.*) also reports that the tour guide must possess an extensive knowledge not only of the country being visited, but also of the culture of the visitors. The tour guide is expected to be a culture broker (Holloway, *ibid.*) and to possess appropriate communication skills that enhance the tourists' experiences (Pearce, 1984, Cohen, 1979).

Today, people from all walks of life from every corner of the world are consistently and increasingly travelling for different purposes, and the number and trend of tourists travelling world wide seems to be on the rise. This can be attributable to several factors including an increase in disposable income and time for travelling, together with the development of transportation as well as better education (Lickorish & Jenkins, 1997: 3). Therefore, in spite of the fact that tour guides have different roles to play and that they have to perform many functions simultaneously, the significance of tour guides' roles and responsibility will undoubtedly be increased in the future.

However, tour guides have to remember that the advent of modern and advanced of information technology has clearly contributed to a new breed of dynamic visitors who would certainly be more demanding (Shackley, 1994). Today's information technology has dramatically increased the prospective visitors' knowledge about different countries in the World. Besides, advances in transportation have enable people nowadays to travel far afield more often and conveniently. Therefore it is a

challenge for tour guides to be able to satisfactorily fulfil their future tourists' needs and requirements.

## Chapter 4

### Research Design and Methodology

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The previous chapter provides an examination of tour guide employment. This chapter reviews the research objectives and identify the related issues arising from the literature review. Later, the definition and study population are then clarified, and the research design identified and examined. This research methodology consisted of a methodology based around a content analysis and a series of qualitative interviews with different individuals and parties concerned in the UK and Thailand: guide training organisers, guide trainers/lecturers, travel agents/tour operators, tour guides, professional guide association, national tourism agency as well as documentation collected during the fieldwork, fieldnotes and observations.

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#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter will deal with key areas of related literature and identify gaps in the literature, in addition to presenting details in terms of how this study can contribute to the body of knowledge on the subject. Also, the conceptual foundations and the resulting methodological approach will later be analysed.

##### 4.1.1 Research Objective and Contribution to Knowledge

Though an investigation of the relevant literature pertaining to this research has been done in the preceding chapters, however, it is necessary to provide a summary here in order to emphasise the related deficiencies.

Arguably, tourism is still a developing field of research and study, which intertwines with a wide range of academic disciplines. Tour guides and tour guides training are at the core of the tourism product providers since they play a significant role in visitors' travelling experience. Whilst effective tour guides can enhance their tour participants' knowledge of local culture and attractions of the country visited, tour guide training can contribute to those tour guides' standard and professionalism. However, there are issues and challenges that are common to all, including the management of tour guide training programmes in many countries worldwide. It is evident from the review of the literature that the research in tour guide training has received very little attention, and this will be one of the first attempts in exploring the management of tour guide training. The researcher reckon that tour guide training requires particular consideration both in general management terms and as an issue of growing significance and importance within the tourism industry.

In the management of tour guide training, the following people are key players: directors of studies of guide training organisers, guide trainers/lecturers, travel agents/tour operators, professional guide association and government tourism body. The extent and nature of both tour guiding and tour guide employment have been reviewed. Visitors do not form the focus of this study, however visitor motivations have been briefly considered because they form a key component in the management and operation of tour guide training, and as 'customers' they form one part of the service delivery relationship. Whilst Human Resource Management has been a focus of hospitality research, it has received less consideration in the tourism literature. Nevertheless, as a service industry, people are vitally important to the delivery of the tourism product.

The majority of work into tour guide training has been at guide training curriculum. At the macro scale of tourism industry, tour guide training including its curriculum is an under-research area. The nature of a tour guiding is changing as tourism itself develops; the role of tour guides within this changing employment and career structure is thus an important area for further research.

The research focuses on tour guide training in comparison between the UK and Thailand. Since tour guides are one of the front-line staff who have the most intimate

and intensive interaction with their tour participants, the performance undoubtedly contributes to visitors' travelling experience. Researches have largely been conducted in the areas of tour guides' interpretations of sites and their ability to satisfy or dissatisfy their tour participants, but very few, if any, would touch upon tour guide training. Thus problems and issues of the management of tour guide training have rarely been addressed.

Much of the work on tour guiding, and the management of tour guide training in particular, has been from a practitioner perspective rather than by academic researchers, and takes the form of case study reports, training documentation. This practitioner emphasis is largely due to the increasingly recognised need to advance and raise the standard of newly graduated tour guides.

In view of this discussion, this research contributes to the body of literature on the management of tour guide training, the understanding of tour guides and tour guiding and qualitative research methodologies.

The original aims of the study were threefold:

- To identify and examine the extent and nature of tour guide training with specific reference to the UK and Thailand,
- To assess the current guide training in both countries and, and
- To develop a strategy for managing tour guide training in Thailand.

During the initial literature review and in the preliminary fieldwork stages the study developed to focus on a number of in-depth cases rather than a broad over-view approach. Two broad objectives emerged: first, to develop an understanding of the management of tour guiding; and second, to contribute to the body of knowledge on the management of tour guide training, by examination of the case of World Heritage listed Sukhothai Historical Park. Within these broad objectives, the original aims were refined:

- To identify and examine the extent and nature of tour guides in Thailand,
- To investigate tour guiding in Thailand, with specific reference to Sukhothai Historical Park,
- To investigate and assess the methods and techniques employed in the management of tour guide training; and
- To explore, appraise and compare the management of tour guiding training in the UK and Thailand.

During the literature review and initial fieldwork, it became clear that the original third aim, to develop a strategy for managing tour guide training in Thailand, was both unfeasible and presumptuous. Common characteristics and important issues were identified that related to all training institutions, however each guide training institution operates within unique constraints. Whilst the identification of these representative features of each guide training institution and their management remains a central aim of the study, the researcher felt that the original aim wrongly implied that there is one unifying 'correct' strategy that could be applied to all guide training institutions. Focusing on the gaps in the literature identified and as the research progressed, the study was refined to focus on the investigation and comparison between the management of tour guide training in the UK and Thailand. In light of this, the third aim was repositioned to centre on the illustration and comparison of guide training in both countries previously mentioned, instead.

The central research design incorporates two main phases: fieldvisits to sample of guide training organisers in the UK and Thailand where a series of interviews with directors of studies and related parties and individuals (tour guides, professional guide associations, travel agents/tour operators and national tourist bodies) were conducted, documentation gathered and observational fieldnotes generated. Before describing the methodology further, the following section will discuss the conceptual foundations of the study and the adoption of a qualitative methodology approach.

### 4.1.2 Conceptual Foundations

Epistemology is the study of the foundations of knowledge (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992). Various epistemological perspectives have different opinions as to what constitutes knowledge. It is, however, suggested that the selection of a particular epistemological base results in a preference for a particular method of research on the grounds of its greater appropriateness (Bryman, 1988). There are two main philosophical perspectives of research, i.e. positivism and interpretativism or phenomenology (known as anti-positivism, humanism or naturalism) (von Wright, 1993). The positivism is a philosophy grounded in scientific principles where the researcher,

"...sees people as phenomena to be studied from the outside, with behaviour to be explained on the basis of facts and observations gathered by the researcher and theories and models developed by the researcher"

The counter-argument which was developed in response to positivism argues that, the social researcher has to get "... 'inside' the objects of his study so that he understands and knows them as subjects" (Walker, 1985:12). Later, this division of philosophical viewpoints is extended to an association with different methodological thinking. In a broader context, the positivist approach lends itself to quantitative methodologies, exemplified by the social survey and investigation. Whereas the interpretivist or phenomenological approach commands a qualitative methodology, i.e. participant observation and unstructured, in-depth interviewing (Bryman, 1988). A comparison of the two dominant paradigms is illustrated below:



**Table 3: Key Features of Positivist and Phenomenological Paradigms**

	<b>Positivist paradigm</b>	<b>Phenomenological paradigm</b>
<b>Basic beliefs:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The world is external and objective</li> <li>• Observer is independent</li> <li>• Science is value-free</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The world is socially constructed and subjective</li> <li>• Observer is part of what is observed</li> <li>• Science is driven by human interests</li> </ul>
<b>Researcher should:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on facts</li> <li>• Look for causality and fundamental laws</li> <li>• Reduce phenomena to simplest elements</li> <li>• Formulate hypotheses and then test them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on meanings</li> <li>• Try to understand what is happening</li> <li>• Look at the totality of each situation</li> <li>• Develop ideas through induction from data</li> </ul>
<b>Preferred methods include:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operationalising concepts so that they can be measured</li> <li>• Taking large samples</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using multiple methods to establish different views of phenomena</li> <li>• Small sample investigated in depth or over time</li> </ul>

**Source: Easterby-Smith *et al* (1991:27)**

Although it is simplistic to divide researchers on epistemological grounds into positivists and phenomenologists, however, it is regarded by Brannen (1992) that the distinction can be useful and helpful in assisting the researchers to understand data in terms of knowledge. This dichotomy of two methodological paradigms in social research has been criticised by many authors including Hammersley (1992) and Ackroyd & Hughes (1992). Despite the researcher has employed the qualitative methodology in his study, but the criticism that this 'dualistic portrayal' of research theory and methodology has turned the issue into a 'qualitative *versus* quantitative' debate is worth investigation.

Quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches are seen to have different strengths and weaknesses, as are individual methods within these wider approach perspectives. For example, Ryan (1995:28-29) suggests that, as a generalisation, "...qualitative research is concerned with the subjective component of research...Quantitative research...bring other advantages, notably some reassurance about the validity & reliability of findings". It is these very strengths and weaknesses that lie behind a number of authors' advancement of a research strategy that combines what could be seen as opposing theoretical methods (for example, Bryman, 1992).

Within the field of tourism, positivist paradigms are dominant, with quantitative rather than qualitative research being most prominent. Decrop (1999:157) points out that only anthropologists and sociologists have fully embraced qualitative approaches within tourism, elsewhere survey research and quantification dominate and "...qualitative techniques are used to provide information for developing further quantitative research" rather than being accepted as 'stand alone' approaches. This secondary status is beginning to change with the advent of more tourism studies taking a qualitative approach. These include studies of both visitors, for example, Masberg & Silverman's (1993) phenomenological approach to examining college student's perceptions of heritage sites; and those working within the tourism industry, for example Jordan (1997) interviewed policy-makers in nine tourism organisations in her study of sex segregation in tourism employment, and Timothy & Wall's (1997) interviewing of Indonesian street vendors.

## **4.2 Preliminary Research**

The above discussion has focused on the conceptual foundations of this research and the preceding chapter has also discussed the focusing aims of this research on tour guide training. This section will consider in greater depth the preliminary stage of research, which further refined the research population. A brief telephone survey was used to identify those tour guide-training organisers, information that later fed into the main research programme.

#### **4.2.1 Survey of Tour Guide Training**

The focus of this research is the study and comparison of tour guide training in the UK and Thailand. In the UK, Blue Badge tour guide training is regarded as one of the world's most strenuous and effective training systems. The researcher contacted the following guide training organisers by telephone and letters: in the UK: London, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Salisbury; in Thailand: Thammasart University, Chulalongkorn University, Kasetsart University and Silpakorn University. In addition, the researcher made a telephony contact the travel agents/tour operators, tour guides, guide trainers/guide lecturers, professional tour guide association and national tourism agencies. It was then necessary to determine which guide training organisers could be studied in the main fieldwork phase. This was done early in the research programme (Winter, 1997) by conducting a brief telephone survey.

The aim of this initial survey was to examine briefly the extent of tour guide training and the possibility of obtaining co-operation for the research project. It was not, however, designed initially to collect data about the tour guide training organisations or the tour guide trainees who are undertaking training programme there.

#### **4.3 Main Research Programme**

The researcher has outlined the background to the research approach, and established the study area and population through clarification of the sample definition and the preliminary research stage. This research takes a phenomenological perspective (section 4.1.1); qualitative research, unlike quantitative, has no standard approach to the reporting of data and procedures. Huberman & Miles (1994:439) advocate that the 'transparency' of method that is present under the conventions of quantitative research should also be present in the reporting of qualitative methods.

They suggest that as a minimum set of expectations, a qualitative methods section should encompass the following elements: sampling decisions made, instrumentation and data collection operations, database summary, software used, analytical strategies followed and inclusion of key data displays supporting main conclusions. This section attempts to present the main research programme and the translation of the research design which is based around the qualitative interviews with previously

mentioned individuals and parties concerned, fieldnote observations and collection of documentation.

#### **4.3.1 Sampling**

The main body of this research has focussed around the in-depth study, using a combination of research tools, of a number, or sample, of tour guide training organisers. This discussion will begin with an overview of the theory of sampling strategies, and then apply this to the research in question. There are a number of characteristics common to tour guide training organisers in both the UK and Thailand that the training program and guide trainees are managed. A range of these variables, including size and location will be discussed in relation to their suitability as a means of categorising and selecting as case study guide training institutions. These sampling strategies will be attempted and their results and suitability evaluated.

The selection of guide training institutions and sample are crucial decisions that affect the viability of the whole study, however, selection must necessarily be undertaken within the constraints of access and practical issues (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The sampling strategy must be selected to fit the "...purpose of the study, the resources available, the questions being asked, and the constraints being faced" (Patton, 1990: 181, 183); the research question being the primary guide to the choice of guide training institutions and guide applicants selection (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992). This study is an example of site-specific research (Marshall & Rossman, 1989) as the research question delimits the choice of tour guide training institutions under government universities, although within this, the researcher has a choice of other guide training institutions.

In his discussion of sample design, Patton (1990) stresses the importance of selecting appropriate 'units of analysis', also referred to as 'sampling units' (Ryan, 1995), and Patton (1990:167) suggests that "...one or more groups are selected as the unit of analysis when there is some important characteristic has important implications for the program". Therefore, in this research, the units of analysis are government-based guide training institutions, particular in Thailand; whereas in the case of Blue Badge

UK training organisers, those selected are, to a certain extent, also government-related.

It is hypothesised that each guide training institutions has identifiable characteristics that influence the ways that guide training programme and guide trainees are managed, such as the type of governing body and the size of the training institution. According to Maykut & Morehouse (1994:56), qualitative researchers set out to build a sample of people or settings with the goal of: "...gaining deep understanding of some phenomenon experienced by a carefully selected group of people". This approach to purposefully selecting people (or settings, organisations) for study acknowledges the complexity that characterises human and social phenomena and the limits of generalisability.

Kuzel (1992) sees the aim of sampling in qualitative research as being to increase the scope and range of data exposed, to uncover what he terms 'multiple realities'. Qualitative research therefore typically focuses on a relatively small sample (even single cases) studied in-depth, where research cases are selected using *purposeful* sampling (Morton-Williams, 1985). This involves the selection of 'information-rich' cases, which are, in the words of Patton (1990:169): "...those for which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling.... The purpose of purposeful sampling is to select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study".

There are a wide number of different strategies available for purposefully selecting information-rich cases. Interestingly, Patton (1990:181) alone identifies sixteen different purposeful sampling strategies, their underlying theme being that they are based on selecting cases from which one can "...learn a great deal about matters of importance", i.e. they are information-rich. The sampling strategy adopted is discussed further below, first the size of the sample is considered.

#### **4.3.2 Size of Sample**

The question of sample size when dealing with qualitative research is an ambiguous issue. Whilst there is a trade-off between breadth and depth, sample size depends on a

number of research factors, including, "...what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources" (Patton, 1990:184).

It was decided to begin the sampling procedure using a sample size of four training organisers in each country which could be revised, if necessary, in the light of the outcome of the sampling strategy selected. Selecting 4 sites would cover 25% of the total population government-based guide training institutions (n=14). As will be discussed below.

#### **4.3.3 Site Variables**

The sample frame of guide training organisers has been discussed in section 4.4.2 in relation to the management of training programme and guide candidates. The sampling of guide training organisers from the total of population and other variables were considered in order to select a range of training organisers for further study. It is proposed that some of these characteristics are more appropriate to employ as variables in selecting the guide training establishments than others, particularly the governing body and size. The different governing bodies operate within different management philosophy and approaches, and it is hypothesised that this may have a considerable influence on the end product, that is the new tour guides are being trained and managed. Therefore, governing body is used as key characteristic for selecting the guide training organisers for further study. The significance of governing body in determining whether those tour guide training establishments selected are suitable for the purpose of study was confirmed by analysis of the results of the preliminary telephone survey. Size of establishments, as measured by guide candidate numbers, was the other main characteristic considered in order to gain a broad spread of guide training institutions across the country.

#### **4.3.4 Location of Guide Training Institutions**

An examination of the geographical spread of guide training institutions shows that guide training institutions in the UK and Thailand are not uniformly spread through the country. There is a clear concentration in the area in Thailand (as well as in the UK) that can be termed as "the Central region" (with a clusters of institutions in

Bangkok), the "North", the "South", the "East" and the "North East" regions. The selection of guide training institutions based on the basis of geographical location is in itself problematic, as there are various regions and the selection of which regions to employ would be extremely arbitrary process. Due to time and financial constraints, it was decided that while it was important to ensure a broad geographical spread, this would be done on an *ad hoc* basis, as a supplement to the consideration of the more important variables of governing body and size.

The 'location' of tour guide training institutions in another sense was also considered. Since the researcher had selected four guide training institutions located in Bangkok Metropolitan area, it is therefore proposed that the location in terms of *situation* is of more significance to the selection of cases than geographical area. The situation of each tour guide training institution was determined using addresses and maps.

#### **4.3.5 Sampling Strategies**

The conclusions to the preceding sections on sampling theory and site variables can now be combined in a consideration of the most appropriate strategy to undertake in the sampling of guide training institutions for the purposes of this research. A number of sampling options was considered and these various options and their suitability will be discussed below.

##### *4.3.5.1 Random Sample*

The most basic sampling method is a simple random sample: each unit of the population has a known and equal chance of selection (Seaton & Bennett, 1996) which enables results gained from the sample to be inferred to the population as a whole. While this ability to generalise from a sample is a key benefit of random sampling, Patton (1990) argues that when the result is a small random sample of a small population then the purpose of random sampling is not representativeness but credibility. Nevertheless, random sampling was not thought appropriate for this research question for a number of reasons. As a form of probability sampling, random sampling assumes that "...the characteristics under study is represented equally in the study group" (Gilchrist, 1992:78), and this is not the case. As has been discussed above, it is proposed that factors such as governing body and size are important to the overall management of guide training courses and to the way guide

candidates are managed. The purpose of a qualitative based study such as this is to concentrate on 'information-rich' cases (Patton, 1990) and thus the data collected from in-depth study based on randomly selected cases would not illustrate the breadth of the tour guide training. It is therefore proposed that a purposive sample is a more appropriate sampling technique.

#### 4.3.5.2 Purposive Sample

Seaton & Bennett (1996b) identify three techniques of non-probability sampling; convenience, quota, and judgement sampling (Table 4), although this can be contrasted with the sixteen categories of purposive sampling identified by Patton (1990). Convenience sampling is rejected by Patton (1990) as the least preferable of his sixteen categories because it is neither purposeful nor strategic, and it produces information-poor rather than information-rich cases. Quota or judgement sampling is preferred and a two-step method of sampling combining these two techniques was used.

**Table 4 Sampling Techniques: non-probability**

<b>Technique</b>	<b>Basic Procedure</b>	<b>Problems</b>
<i>Convenience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Units selected through convenience, i.e. self-selected or readily available.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Samples not representative of population.</li> <li>Sampling error cannot be measured.</li> <li>Cannot infer results to population.</li> </ul>
<i>Quota</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Control variables used to select sample, e.g. male/female.</li> <li>Variables can be interlocked: classification variables most common.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficult to ensure accuracy in terms of units conforming to control variables.</li> <li>Relevant control variable(s) omitted due to insufficient knowledge.</li> <li>Practical difficulties arising out of too many control variables, i.e. filling cells.</li> <li>Bias in selection of respondents, i.e. those accessible or approachable.</li> </ul>
<i>Judgement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Select units for particular purpose.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent to which 'typical' unknown.</li> <li>Sampling error unknown.</li> <li>Cannot infer results to population.</li> </ul>

Source: modified from Seaton & Bennett (1996:96)



The key variables in framing the tour guide training institution selection were governing body and size (guide trainee numbers); these formed the framework matrix within which judgement sampling was applied. Other more arbitrary factors were also considered, albeit in a peripheral manner. These included the practical constraints that must govern any research (Patton, 1990), such as issues of possible fieldwork costs and access to sites. Access to key informants is crucial in successful field research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983) and thus the responses to the preliminary telephone survey and the researcher's informal contracts, developed through previous guiding activities and colleagues, were also taken into account.

#### **4.4 Access to Research Sites**

In all, the researcher aimed to interview director of studies of 4 training institutions each in the UK and Thailand, plus a pilot. From the initial 4 sample institutions in each country, problem occurred two in the UK and 3 in Thailand. Two training directors of studies of guide training in the UK could not be reached; whereas in Thailand, one refused access and one training institution seemed to misinterpret who the research request was aimed at. Access was refused at another training institution because of staffing changes; the director of studies having recently retired and a successor not having been appointed.

Replacement training institutions were also selected to substitute for the UK and for Thailand where access was refused. These training institutions were selected. It is, however, important to emphasise that the researcher is not suggesting that an alternative would replace the first choice case in terms of producing the same or similar results at the fieldwork stage, rather both would have the same governing body and size characteristics. The alternative sites were contacted and all agreed to take part in the study.

#### **4.5 Collection Methods**

In this study, the researcher has employed a qualitative approach, including in-depth interviews, documentation collected and fieldnotes observations. However, there have been cases where the choice of methodological tools as part of research designs often been portrayed as quantitative *versus* qualitative. It has to be mentioned that,

for those researchers, one of the limitations of combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies in the same research project is that the data produced by each is different and so not easily comparable (Bryman, 1992). In this research project, the important methodological decision was to undertake a series of in-depth interviews both directors of studies of guide training institutions and concerned individuals and parties, documentation and fieldnote observations.

The research objectives focus around six key parties: guide training institutions, guide trainers/lecturers, travel agents/tour operators, tour guides, professional guide associations and government tourism agency, and thus the data collection also centred around these six related parties. Access to site is a key factor in determining success (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). In this research the key gatekeepers, "...those individuals in an organisation that have the power to grant or withhold access to people or situations for the purposes of research" (Burgess, 1984:48), were directors of studies of guide training institutions where the researcher wished to undertake fieldwork. These directors of studies were important because they not only formed one of the six interview groups mentioned above, but controlled the access to the guide trainers/lecturers as well.

At each guide training institution, the person with responsibility for organising guide training programme was identified, and on two occasions two people were interviewed. In general, there was one relevant authorised staff at each guide training institution and thus selection of these informants was relatively straightforward. The initial contact letter to each guide training institution was addressed to this named member of staff, with a request to interview the director of studies, guide trainers/lecturers. This approach led to the telephone contacts made and letters being addressed straight to the member of staff that was subsequently interviewed in all but one case. Non-responses to the initial letters were followed up with a telephone call, and letters of confirmation were sent to participants thanking them for their co-operation, giving further details of the study, and confirming the fieldwork visit details.

Practical and financial constraints meant that, in both the UK and Thailand, each tour guide training institution could be visited only once and the main concern over the

sampling of guide trainers/lecturers and other related interviewees would be based on the rapport made between the researcher and the director of studies. Access to guide trainers/lecturers, both in terms of permission to speak with them and arrangements about the interviews themselves, had to take place through the 'gatekeeper', the

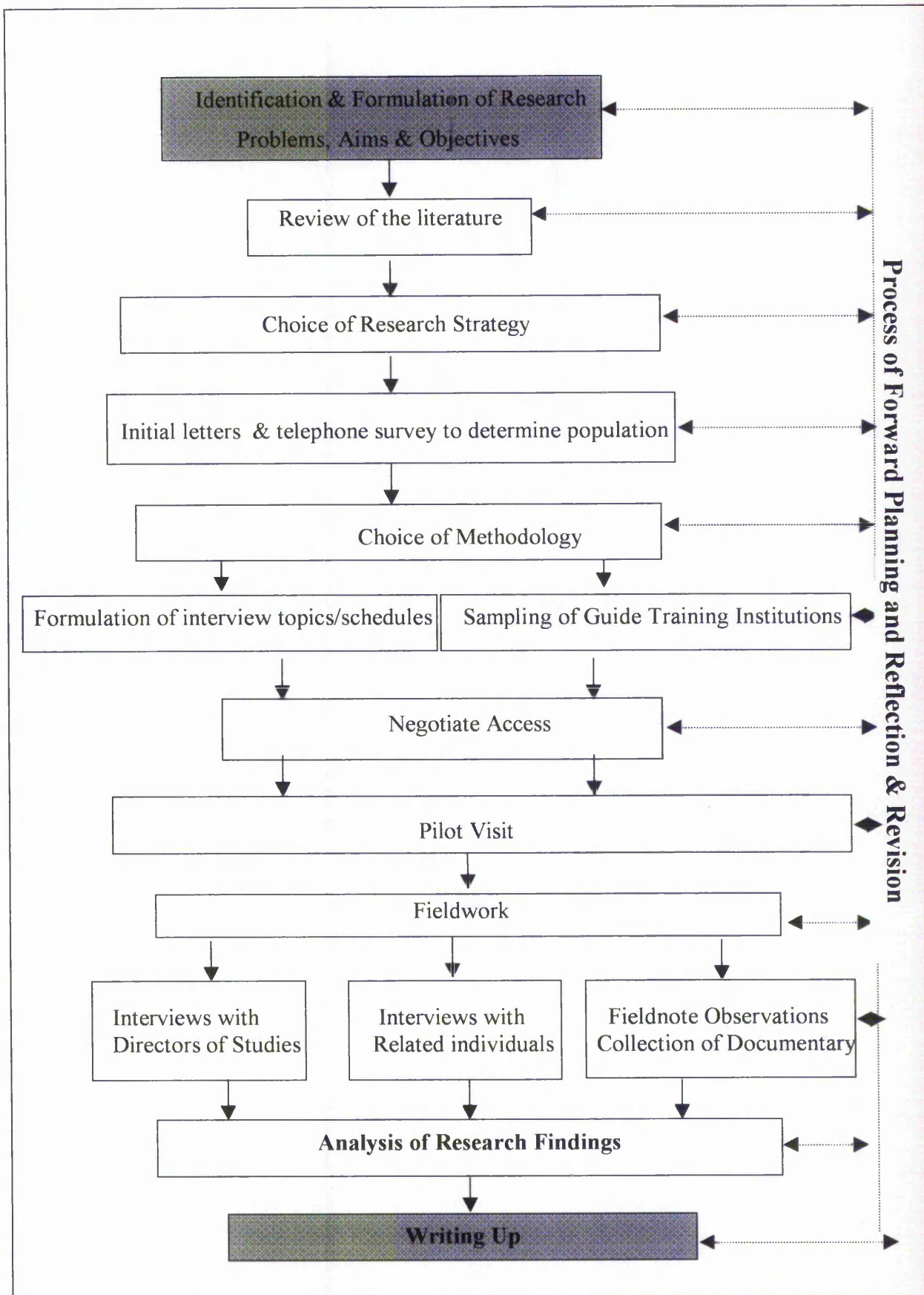
director of studies. As Valentine (1997:116) points out: "...who you talk with will affect what information and perspectives you get" and she goes on to warn that "...they do not try to direct you to a narrow selection of members...and discourage you from talking to others". In theory the gatekeeper could bias the sample of guide trainers/lecturers by controlling access at two levels, first by the day of the visit itself and second by the guide trainers/lecturers they arranged interviews with on the day. Consciously or unconsciously the gatekeepers may bias the sample<sup>9</sup> by granting access only to those with a particular viewpoint or who perhaps fit their notion of a 'good' guide trainer/lecturer. However, by employing a qualitative methodology, the researcher hopes that this would serve as a suitable methodological approach.

The researcher's epistemology is grounded in a non-positivist paradigm and so the qualitative interviewing of director of studies, guide trainers/lecturers and other related individuals was the key basis of the research design, attempting to understand and describe guide training process rather than measuring or counting events. The final research design process is illustrated in Figure 5. This mirrors the research process models suggested by authors such as Saunders *et al.* (1997) and Ryan (1995). It should be noted that although the research model is largely linear in format, the processes of both forward planning and reflection and revision were central to the research process. This research design accepts the weakness inherent in the sampling of related individuals through their bosses, i.e. the sample was not controlled by the researcher, by attempting to put these responses in context and improve their validity and reliability by employing qualitative methodology in the form of participant observations and of fieldnotes compiled during each visit. Besides, documentation was also collected. The actual research tools utilised: interviews, participation observation, fieldnote observations and documentation are discussed below.

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<sup>9</sup> See also Hammersley & Atkinson (1983: 65) for discussion of gatekeepers exercising "some degree of surveillance and control"

Figure 3 The Research Process



#### 4.6 Interview

Interviews have been defined as "a conversation with purpose" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:268) and qualitative interviews were the central research tool of this study. The goal of a qualitative research interview is to view the research topic from the viewpoint and in the language of the interviewee (King, 1994; Patton, 1990; Walker, 1985) and Valentine (1997:111) summarises the key advantage of using interviews as: "...it is sensitive and people-oriented, allowing interviewees to constructive their own accounts of the experiences by describing and explaining their lives in their own words".

Types of interviewing can be distinguished by their degree of format standardisation and the extent to which questions are prepared beforehand (Fontana & Frey, 1998; Holstein & Gubrium, 1997; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Patton, 1990), and Patton (1990) identifies three basic approaches: *the informal conversational interview*; *the general interview guide approach*; and *the standardised open-ended interview*. This research adopts the middle of Patton's three approaches, the general interview guide, also known as depth, in-depth or semi-structured interviews (Jones, 1985). The researcher determines the issues to be explored with the respondent prior to the interview and during the encounter this interview guide acts as a basic checklist.

Unlike *the standardised open-ended interview*, these issues can be taken in any order and the wording of the questions to each respondent may differ, although the same areas are covered (Kane, 1990; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Valentine, 1997). Patton (1990) sees the advantage of this approach being that the interviewer can decide how best to use the limited time available in an interview situation, whilst ensuring that interviews with different respondents and by different interviewers all cover the same basic pre-determined areas. It allows elements of the 'conversational' style of the informal interview whilst retaining much of the systematic approach of the standardised open-ended interview. Whilst Patton (1990) sees one of its key weaknesses being that if they have been omitted from the interview guide then important topics may be missed, Silverman (1993) points out that the semi-structured format still allows respondents to raise issues that the interviewer may not have thought of (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Patton (1990: 288) also cautions that, "...interviewer flexibility in sequencing and wording questions can result in

substantially different responses from different perspectives, thus reducing the comparability of responses".

A semi-structured approach to interviewing involves the preparation of an interview schedule or guide (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Rather than being a rigid set of questions to be asked in a particular order and form, this is a list of themes to be covered during the interview, to guide the researcher (Valentine, 1997). Six sets of respondents were interviewed, thus six interview schedules were prepared (Appendices 1-6); their content formed by the literature review. Many of the key themes identified were covered in both the directors of studies of selected guide training institutions and related individuals interviews so that the responses could be compared. The interview guide was also modified slightly for each training institution and concerned persons depending on the individual circumstances of each institution, such as directors of studies, guide trainers/lecturers, travel agents/tour operators, tour guides, professional guide association and government tourism body. As Valentine (1997) suggests, the degree of detail required in the interview schedule will partly depend upon the experience of the researcher and as the fieldwork progressed the researcher had to refer to the key questions less frequently.

Although the format did not require the questions to be asked in a strict order, in practice the director of studies interview in particular took on a basic pattern, following Hart's (1989) suggestions for three stages to interviews. After a brief introduction about the study, the researcher began with questions about the respondent, such as job title and responsibilities, and how they fitted into the organisational structure, as these guided the respondent into the interview gently with non-threatening and easy to answer questions, which also encouraged the respondent to talk descriptively (King, 1994; Patton, 1990). These two stages were followed by the main body of the interview; a basic chronology of questions was generally followed as it took the discussion through the director of studies of selected guide training institutions from their initial guide trainee recruitment through guide training management and curriculum, apart from practical guiding and final examination.

Again following Patton's guidelines (1990), questions about the future<sup>10</sup>, and thus more speculative, were left until after the past and present situation had been discussed. The more potentially controversial questions<sup>11</sup> were also kept until the end of the interview was approaching when rapport had been developed between the researcher and the respondent, although following the advice of King (1994), care was taken to end the interview on a positive note.

#### **4.7 Field Notes**

Authors stress the importance of recording experiences and observations made during fieldwork in the form of fieldnotes (Denscombe, 1998; Flick, 1998; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994); Decrop (1999) sees them as an element of data triangulation. As recommended, these were made immediately after each fieldvisit. An opportunity also arose to attend a two-session information and training event run by the London Blue Badge tour guide training for guide trainees. The debate around the overt/covert nature of participant observation and the roles taken by researchers have been covered at length (see Adler & Adler, 1994; Jorgensen, 1989). The researcher attended the two training seminar sessions as an observer, while at the same time not concealing his role as an academic researcher, thus taking the role of participant-as-observer (Flick, 1998). Again, fieldnotes were taken during and immediately after the event, and were included at the analysis stage.

#### **4.8 Documentation**

Documents of various types can also be used to triangulate the findings of other data collection techniques (Shipman, 1988); documents are a form of secondary, as opposed to primary, data. Directors of studies were asked for any documentation they produced about or for guide trainees such as recruitment adverts, application forms, guidelines or training manuals. Other publications such as guidebooks and promotional literature were also collected to develop a fuller illustration of how each guide training institution selected presents itself and its guide training programmes.

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<sup>10</sup> For example, questions about how they say guide training development in the future.

<sup>11</sup> For example, questions about 'problem' guide trainees, failed guide trainees, guide trainees' attitudes guiding job in general.



#### **4.9 Pilot Study**

In this study the qualitative interview schedules were also piloted at one guide training institution. A full management interview was conducted in order to pilot the interview schedule which remained largely unchanged, however the interview proved to be an important learning experience for the researcher in terms of interview technique. Informal interviews were also held (with four directors of studies, four guide trainers/lecturers, four travel agents/tour operators, eight tour guides, one professional tour guide association and one government tourism official) and initial concerns over the variability of the format of interviews were confirmed<sup>12</sup>. The related-individuals interviews schedules were revised so that an abbreviated version was also available for those situations when a full interview could not take place.

#### **4.10 Fieldwork**

Section 4.4 set out the reasoning behind the choice of research methodology and this section will consider the application of this research design in the field. The key research was based around a series of qualitative interviews with directors of studies of guide training institutions and other related persons, and these will be considered first, followed by a review of fieldnote observations and documentation collected during fieldvisits.

#### **4.11 Interviewing**

The original aim had been to interview four directors of studies at four guide training institutions and related individuals in each country, the UK and Thailand. In all, forty-four persons (twenty-two in each country) were interviewed. In the initial contact letter it was stated that the interview may take up to 30-45 minutes; in practice the interviews ranged from 1-1.5 hours. In the majority of interviews the researcher was able to cover all the planned topics in the time allowed, and in many cases other areas were also explored.

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<sup>12</sup> These initial concerns about the different conditions of the contact with interviewees proved to be founded with a range of locations and formats being experienced.



The use of a tape recorder only has increased the speed and accuracy of data collection (see also Doolan, 1990; Ely *et al.*, 1991), but also allows the interviewer to pay more attention to the interviewee (Hart, 1989; Mitchell, 1993; Patton, 1990; Valentine, 1997). However, recording interviews does not eliminate the need for taking notes, both during and after the interview. All the interviewees in this study were taped and only very brief notes were taken so as not to detract from the interviewees themselves.

Immediately after the interview the researcher made taped and written fieldnote observations about the interview, such as its setting, how the interviewer and respondent interacted, and any other relevant information, such as any comments that were made off-tape (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Interviews were spread across a number of months and so between each interviews or series of interviews, the researcher returned to his base and there made more comprehensive observations, including using printed documents for background information.

Whereas all the directors of studies interviews were recorded, thirty-eight out of other remaining forty related individual interviews were taped which necessitated the greater use of note taking during these interviews. The interview situation determined if a tape recorder was used and if notes were taken during or after the interview. As can be seen in table 5 & 6, forty-two related individuals out of forty-four (twenty-two in each country) interviews were tape-recorded, notes were made during a further two interviews. Obviously, the most comprehensive records were produced by the taped interviews, which were then transcribed. Not only did these produce a fuller and more accurate collection of data, note taking during the interview detracted from the flow of the interview, and a poorer record again was produced when the researcher had to recall what had been covered during the exchange before making notes afterwards. Whereas taped interviews produced accurate verbatim responses, fewer quotations could be taken from the note-recorded interviews, and those where the notes were taken afterwards recorded only the broad themes and points made.

Puwar (1997) discusses a number of aspects in terms of interviewer and interviewee's interaction and the impacts of interview location, duration and the characteristics of both parties. She illustrates a table containing detailed interview conditions of those interviews that people other than the interview subject were also present at. The researcher has developed the author's framework to include all interviews in this study, with additional features also included (Table 5 & 6).

Table 5 Interviews with Related Individuals in the UK

Table 5 Interview Details in the U.K.

Ref.	Site	Job Titles	Sex	Location of Interview	Type of interview Space*	Institution open or closed	Other persons present (period)	Behaviour of Others	Interruptions
D01	A	Dir. of study	F	Office area	Staff	Open	None	N/A	-
D02	B	Dir. of study	F	Office area	Staff	Open	2 children	Crying and Shouting	Yes
D03	C	Dir. of study	F	Home	Private	Closed	Joint interview	N/A	Yes
D04	D	Dir. of study	F	Home	Private	Closed	Partner	Taking part	-
GTL01	n.a.	Guide Trainer/lecturer	F	Home	Private	Closed	None	N/A	-
GTL02	n.a.	Guide Trainer/lecturer	F	Office area	Staff	Open	None	N/A	-
GTL03	n.a.	Guide Trainer/lecturer	M	Home	Private	Closed	None	N/A	-
GTL04	n.a.	Guide Trainer/lecturer	M	Office area	Staff	Closed then open	None	N/A	Member of Staff came in
M01	n.a.	Manager	M	Office area	Staff	Open	None	N/A	Tele. call
M02	n.a.	Manager	M	Office area	Staff	Open	Joint interview	N/A	Secretary came
M03	n.a.	Manager	M	Office area	Staff	Closed	None	N/A	Answer call
M04	n.a.	Manager	F	Office area	Staff	Closed	Joint interview	N/A	-
TG01	n.a.	Tour guide	F	Restaurant	Public	Open	None	N/A	Waiter came
TG02	n.a.	Tour guide	F	Home	Private	Closed	None	N/A	Tele. Rang
TG03	n.a.	Tour guide	M	Gallery	Public	Open	None	N/A	-
TG04	n.a.	Tour guide	F	Museum	Public	Open	None	N/A	Passer-by
TG05	n.a.	Tour guide	M	Home	Private	Closed	None	N/A	-
TG06	n.a.	Tour guide	F	Home	Private	Closed	None	N/A	-
TG07	n.a.	Tour guide	M	Home	Private	Closed	None	N/A	-
TG08	n.a.	Tour guide	F	Home	Private	Closed	None	N/A	-
PGA01	n.a.	President of Guide Association	F	Home	Private	Closed	None	N/A	-
NT001	n.a.	Admin. Staff	F	Office area	Staff	Open	None	N/A	Tele. Ring

\*Type of Interview Space: 'Public' refers to places accessible to the general public; 'Private' refers to interview spaces that were private within the institution; and 'Open' areas which refers to spaces that are open to other members of staff, e.g. open and shared admin spaces.

Table 6 .Interviews with Related Individuals in Thailand

Table 6 Interview Details in Thailand

Ref.	Site	Job Titles	Sex	Location of Interview	Type of interview Space*	Institution open or closed	Other persons present (period)	Behaviour of Others	Interruptions
D01	A	Dir. of study	F	Office area	Staff	Open	Joint interview	Taking part	-
D02	B	Dir. of study	F	Office area	Staff	Open	None	N/A	Yes
D03	C	Dir. of study	F	Office area	Staff	Closed	None	N/A	Yes
D04	D	Dir. of study	F	Office area	Staff	Closed	None	-	-
GTL01	n.a.	Guide Trainer/lecturer	F	Office area	Staff	Closed	None	N/A	Tele. call
GTL02	n.a.	Guide Trainer/lecturer	F	Office area	Staff	Open	None	N/A	-
GTL03	n.a.	Guide Trainer/lecturer	M	Home	Private	Closed	None	N/A	-
GTL04	n.a.	Guide Trainer/lecturer	M	Office area	Staff	Closed then open	None	N/A	-
M01	n.a.	Manager	M	Office area	Staff	Open	Joint interview	N/A	Secretary came in
M02	n.a.	Manager	M	Office area	Staff	Open	None	N/A	-
M03	n.a.	Manager	M	Office area	Staff	Closed	None	N/A	-
M04	n.a.	Manager	F	Office area	Staff	Closed	Joint interview	N/A	-
TG01	n.a.	Tour guide	F	Office area	Staff	Open	None	N/A	-
TG02	n.a.	Tour guide	F	Office area	Staff	Closed	None	N/A	-
TG03	n.a.	Tour guide	M	Office area	Staff	Open	None	N/A	-
TG04	n.a.	Tour guide	F	Office area	Staff	Open	None	N/A	-
TG05	n.a.	Tour guide	M	Office area	Staff	Closed	None	N/A	-
TG06	n.a.	Tour guide	F	Office area	Staff	Closed	None	N/A	- Answer call
TG07	n.a.	Tour guide	M	Office area	Staff	Closed	None	N/A	-
TG08	n.a.	Tour guide	F	Office area	Staff	Closed	None	N/A	-
PGA01	n.a.	President of Guide Asso.	M	Office area	Staff	Closed	None	N/A	Tele. Ring
NT001	n.a.	Admin. Staff	M	Office area	Staff	Open	None	N/A	Tele. Ring

\*Type of Interview Space: 'Public' refers to places accessible to the general public; 'Private' refers to interview spaces that were private within the institution; and 'Open' areas which refers to spaces that are open to other members of staff, e.g. open and shared admin spaces.

#### 4.12 Location of Interview

All the interviews conducted took place in different areas ranging from residential home to working places and therefore on their own familiar territory (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). The setting of the interviews, including those with guide trainers/lecturers, tour guides were determined by their employers. A range of locations were used from the director's studies office, staff rooms and public areas to the living room of the interviewees. Three types of interview location can be classified: *public*, *staff* and *private*. 'Public' refers to places accessible to the general public such as display rooms in the museum or house. 'Private' refers to interview spaces that were private within the interviewee's offices; these were places that another member of staff would knock before entering. 'Staff' spaces are those open to general members of staff, such as shared offices and staff rest and refreshment areas. In practice the type of interview space went some way to determining the likelihood of being overheard or interrupted during the interview (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983) or other people being present. As would be expected, interviews in private spaces received fewest interruptions and anyone else entering the area would be more aware that an interview was in progress and would quietly attend to their own business or leave.

#### 4.13 Presence of Others

It was found in Puwar (1997:7.4) study that when other people were present, "...the interviewee had an audience, other than the researcher, to whom an image of self had to be presented". Although this self-image factor may not have been so strong in this study, Puwar was interviewing politicians with a public profile, the presence of others during the interview was still likely to have had an effect on a respondent's 'performance'. Considering the interviews conducted in the researcher's study, fifteen of these interviews were conducted jointly with either at least one respondent so another person was present throughout. Five interview sessions had another person in addition to the interviewee present for part of the time, and the remaining twenty-four interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis. A prolonged presence has been distinguished from short-term interruptions which are considered below.

Five of the cases concerned the entrance of a senior staff of the tour operating company and another tour guide for a short period of time. The researcher was

introduced to a tour guide and they then attended to other business in the room, not appearing to take any notice of the interview. The interviewee did not seem to modify their behaviour during this period, although it is of course almost impossible for the researcher to judge the extent of the effect of these colleagues. In one instance, the director of studies had one assistant and leader of guide students present while giving an interview and the researcher had to conduct a joint interview simultaneously. As with the dual tour guide interview, this meant that the two respondents fed off each other's comments and the interview at times became more like a conversation between the interviewees. While there was a danger in these cases that the researcher could lose control of the interview, in general control was retained by the interviewer asking questions from which discussion then developed. In another case, the interview was conducted in a room which an interviewee sat answering the telephone. During the interview, two different tour guides undertook this role and both were listening for periods and in a couple of instances themselves contributed comments.

In a number of the interviews people other than the respondent were also present. There was a wider range of locations for the various interviews and the interviews differed more widely in their nature, ranging from a ten minute informal 'conversation' to a one-hour interview. The presence of others was also significant in these interviews, especially when the person was a colleague or a member of management staff, which occurred in fifteen out of forty-four interviews. This clearly results in issues of subordinates talking in front of their supervisors or that of employees speaking in front of their employers.

#### **4.14 Interruptions**

In addition to the presence of others during the interviews, there were also many short-term interruptions which affected the interviews in two main ways. One was an effect similar to that discussed above, the knowledge that someone else was hearing their views and opinions, and again this was particularly an issue when the other person was a superior, or a subordinate, as opposed to a visitor or a peer-colleague. The other effect was to break the flow of the interview. In most cases these interruptions consisted of someone, either a colleague or a visitor walking into the room, particularly when the interview was taking place in a staff or public area.

Usually the interrupter either realised it was an interview situation and left, or conveyed any message or question they had for the interviewee and then retreated. These interruptions would usually have the effect of breaking the flow of the interview even if only for a few seconds.

#### **4.15 Shared Identities**

One author (Silverman, 1993:113) advanced that: "All interviews are interactional" with a relationship of some kind formed between the interviewer and the respondent, or respondents. The form of this relationship is a key factor in determining the flow and format of the exchange and feminist researcher in particular have studied the issue of the relationship between the researcher and their informant (Easterday *et al.*, 1982; Finch, 1984; Oakley, 1981; Puwar, 1997; Valentine, 1997). Oakley (1981) stressed the importance of the researcher interacting and sharing of information with respondents rather than treating them as subjects to extract information from, and the principle of reciprocity in research is now accepted as good practice (Valentine, 1997). Qualitative researchers believe there can never be a "relationship-free" interview (King, 1994) and thus the interviewee must be seen as an active 'participant' in the research process.

Interviews are not a neutral tool (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) and the relationship and interaction between researcher and informant will be influenced to a varying degree by what can be termed shared or common identities (Puwar, 1997). Feminist researchers first considered this in terms of gender (Chandler, 1990; Finch, 1984; Oakley, 1981; Scott, 1984) but there are a range of other factors, including what Hammersley & Atkinson (1983:84) term "ascribed" characteristics, such as age and ethnicity (Webster, 1996), as well as characteristics such as common backgrounds in locations, families, education and occupation (Puwar, 1997; Valentine, 1997). The presence or absence of shared identities and links go some way to determining the rapport with participants, however, it is often difficult to know in advance what would create this rapport (Puwar, 1997).

#### **4.16 Fieldnotes Process**

The completion of fieldnotes and observations has already been discussed above. During and immediately after each fieldvisit, the researcher made written and taped

notes and observations about the interviews, the guide training institutions and the visits. These were subsequently written up and used as a data source in the analysis.

#### **4.17 Documentation**

Documents were collected at each guide training institution to triangulate the findings of the interviews and observations. 'Public documents' (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) can help put personal experiences and organisations in context and a range of documents were gathered including: recruitment literature, application forms, training manuals, in addition to general promotion and information publications such as leaflets and guidebooks. However, care must be taken when interpreting documentary evidence as "...all documents are distant from the reality they may reflect" (Shipman, 1988:108).

#### **4.18 Conclusion**

This chapter has sought to introduce and discuss the research design and methodological aspects of this study. The broad issues arising from the literature have been reviewed and linked to the study's research objectives and aims. The two broad objectives being to explore tour guide training and the professionalism of tour guides in both the UK and Thailand, covering examining the management of guide training, its curriculum as well as characteristics of tour guides of both countries. The researcher's epistemology is grounded in a phenomenological paradigm and so qualitative interviews with both the director of studies of selected guide training institutions and individuals concerned were the central research tool adopted. The researcher employed a qualitative methodology including a series of interviews, participation observation and documentation gathering. These data collection methods have been reviewed and their implementation discussed, including the issues of sampling, access. The study population of guide training institution was established by means of a telephone survey and the following chapter begins with an examination of the findings of this preliminary stage.



## **Chapter 5**

### **Preliminary Findings**

#### **Tour Guide Training in the UK**

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**This chapter presents the preliminary findings of investigation of the UK Blue Badge tour guide training management, and tour guide training organisers' philosophy. It explores various aspects of guide training system, including the tour guide training advertisement, recruitment criteria and interviewing panels. In addition, pre-entrant and final examinations, major subjects taught and, last but not least, tuition fees are briefly studied.**

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##### **5.1 Introduction**

The Blue Badge guide's training course has been organised all over the UK, except in Northern Ireland (Interview 1). In London, interested people will contact the Elizabethan Buro (an administrative office for guide training) for an application form. After receiving the application forms, the organising committee will carefully select the appropriate applicants through this information. Guide applicants who are not originally British are advised to have lived in London for approximately 2 years.

According to Pond (1993:10-11), England, was one of the first countries in Europe to regulate and train guides. It is suggested that though there have been recently development of the guiding profession and guide training throughout Europe, no evidence of training for guides exists prior to the twentieth century other than Thomas

Cook's company training. Guide training and regulation in most European countries mirrors the progress demonstrated in England, and since the 1950s has served as a model for the rest of the world where, until recently, few advancements in professional status have been achieved.

Clearly, after the Second World War, there were dramatic changes in communications and transportation. Travel became easier and more widely available to people from all walks of life, especially the middle classes (Burkart & Medlik, 1989; Lickorish & Jenkins, 1997; Holloway, 1994). Tourism organisations and tourist-related businesses expanded rapidly and tourism began to be recognised as a unified industry. Therefore, shortly after World War II, tourism has been gradually accepted as a course of study in educational establishments all over the world.

## **5.2 Admission Criteria**

Guide applicants come from different backgrounds with a wide range of different abilities and personalities, such as teachers, police officers, nurses, office workers, taxi drivers, and women who have grown-up children and want to come back to work. Interested people can apply for the training course irrespective of educational requirements (Interview 2). Though a considerable number of applicants have applied every year, only suitable applicants are accepted.

An experienced guide (Interview 3) admits that:

"It is true to say that not everybody can be a tourist guide and that the guide applicants must be carefully selected".

Therefore, successful guide applicants are those who have demonstrated through their work history, education and their own interest and hobbies that they are able to assimilate substantial guiding knowledge, and general information necessary for guiding profession. The author agrees that successful guide applicants should have a likeable personality, a sense of humour and the serious intention of taking on a guiding career, and that it is important to select guide applicants who also have a capacity to retain dates, statistics, names and to recall accurately. As one of the

interview panel (Interview 4) points out that: "It is no good to have candidates who are like talking textbooks".

Based on an interview with a guide trainer/lecturer (Interview 5), the London Blue Badge guide's training course has two types of pre-entry tests: written and interview. Generally, *the written test* takes two hours covering such subjects as geography, history, literature, music, arts, architecture, and general information, e.g., the cost of sending a postcard to different countries from London. The general information test aims at evaluating the guide applicants' existing knowledge. It is designed for the applicants to answer a statement or question whether it is correct or incorrect.

*The interview test* aims to assess the guide applicant's personality and motivations. Guide applicants will be asked to talk about themselves, apart from their motivations and inspiration. Encouraging the guide applicants to talk helps the interview board get an impression of their enthusiasm, self-confidence, and flexibility. The Director of Studies (Interview 6) stresses that one of the vital elements that enhances guiding performance is flexibility, without which guides would often encounter difficulties.

In certain circumstances, such as finding a place for parking, tour guides sometimes have to bend the rules. An example given by a guide trainer/lecturer (Interview 7) was about a guide who was a police officer. He showed how uncomfortable he was when dealing with critical situations which required him to bend the rules.

In their guiding career, guides have to be flexible in dealing with various situations and types of tourists who have varied interests and backgrounds. The interview will enable the interview panel to immediately and carefully evaluate guide applicants as to their suitability.

### **5.3 Entrance Examination Format**

#### ***a) Written examination:***

The written test (Interview 8 ) in the pre-entry examination will usually take the form of a two-hour "quick question" paper (requiring one or two-word answers) covering the subjects such as:

- *Architecture*: questions will be general knowledge with a practical bias towards London which reflect those of an informed tourist in London,
- *Geography*: London is the capital of Great Britain. Familiarity with a map of the British Isles, including physical aspects, is essential. Great Britain is also part of the European Union. So, a general awareness of the map of Europe is also recommended,
- *History*: Familiarity with a general outline of the chronology of British history is sought. This will form a major part of the course,
- *Literature and Theatre*: Much literature is familiar to visitors of London through television programmes and films, while the theatre is world-renowned. Poet's corner in Westminster Abbey is a good place to begin,
- *Music and Painting*: Questions will reflect those of the informed tourist to London,
- *London*: Familiarity with a map of London and intelligent reading of a good short guidebook is required. Take a guided tour of Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral and the Tower of London. Take a Round London Sightseeing Tour with a Blue Badge Guide, and
- *Current Events*: It is recommended to read a National Newspaper regularly, and/or listen to radio/television news.

***b) Interview:***

The guide applicants are selected by completing a fairly detailed application form which lists their work history, education history, personal interests, experience, etc. of the applicant. In London, their background knowledge will be tested by a short exam paper. If the applicants do well in the exam, they will be called for an interview. So the selection is partly based on the result of the pre-entry test. The applicants called for interview will be given a subject to prepare, in order to give a short talk to the interviewing board on a topic related to tourism. Typically, the interviewing board consists of 4 people, e.g. the director of the training courses, a registered tourist guide (often one of the guide tutors on the course), a representative of a tour operator (incoming tour operator), and a representative from the education and training department of a local tourist authority. The interview usually takes approximately 20 minutes, of which about 5 minutes is an oral presentation, when they are asked to talk about themselves, and their interests.

If candidates are offering foreign languages, the interview board will make sure that there is at least one of the committee who speaks that language to give a short test to find out how capable they are. The candidates are assessed for their personality, the way they talk, and their appearance. In London, the initial number of interested people is approximately 400 each year (Interview 9), but 200 drop out once they see the application form (presumably, it is not as easy as they thought!). The 200 candidates remaining sit for the pre-entry examination, and 80 are chosen for the interview. Finally, 30 - 40 of the successful applicants are selected for the training course.

***c) Training fees:***

The overall cost of Blue Badge guide training (1998-1999) is in the region of £2,000, which accounted for a 100 per cent increase from the cost of training 10 years ago being approximately £1,000 (Interview 10) Normally, guide trainees would pay their own fees because they do not get grants for it. Most of them have full time jobs as well as studying to become tourist guides, so it is very hard work for them.

One guide trainee (Interview 11) admitted that:

"My friends and I have to do a lot of study and extensive research. Besides the tough training, the overall expenditure is very expensive".

But once they complete the guide training, the guiding income is quite satisfactory and the going rate is very appealing (Interview 12 ). Also, having good connections helps considerably with guiding opportunities. Some guides who are able to establish a networking approach find it very helpful in getting a job the whole year round. A certain number of Blue Badge guides can depend on guiding income if they are willing to work very hard, especially in London where the tourist season covers the whole year.

Nevertheless, this all depends on where the guides are. In Scotland, the tourist season is quite short which certainly affects the guides' income. But in London, there are visitors all year round. Many tourist guides in London are able to work seven days a week for the whole summer. By and large, tour guides working in London can live comparatively comfortably on guiding income alone, each would earn approximately £100 a day. An experienced guide reveals that a minimum guide fee per day is £75 for English-speaking guides, and £120 if a language apart from English is involved, plus tips and occasionally, commissions from shops and restaurants, though this is often split with the driver.

Clearly, the tour guides have many roles to play not only one at a time, often they have to play those roles virtually at the same time. A guiding job is one of very few jobs in the world that require the performers to wear many hats simultaneously (Holloway, 1979). They must get ready to put on the right hat at the right time at the right place and, most importantly, with the right tourists (Interview 13).

#### ***d) Length of the Programme***

A Blue-Badge guide trainer/lecturer (Interview 14 ) has pointed out that since guide trainees are required to spend considerable time on a practical task, the length of the London Blue Badge guide training programme takes two years to complete. Generally, the training course commences in October of each year and finishes in

March/April of the following year (6 months approximately per year), and restarts the following October.

With regard to lecturing classes, the guide trainees have lectures 2 evenings per week (2 hours per evening from 6.30-8.30 p.m.). Every Saturday the guide trainees have to do practical work, such as going to museums, churches, pre-historic sites, and other locations, and have a demonstration tour of those sites. This practical work is regarded as important as, if not more than, the guiding knowledge itself.

One of the guide trainers (Interview 15) said:

"In practical task, the first time the guide tutor will give a commentary model, and the second time, the trainees have to do the work. Guide trainees have to do a lot of practical work, such as working on a coach giving a commentary and pointing out places of interest in plenty of time for the passengers to turn and look. For example, they should say: 'The big, red house coming up on your right', instead of just saying 'The house over there'".

Another experienced guide (Interview 16 ) has maintained that:

"It is very important for guide trainees to give the indication and get the timing right and must be specific in their presentation".

The author believes that to encourage guide trainees to have considerable hands-on guiding experience while being trained is, undoubtedly, the most effective way to assure their employers of guides' quality and efficiency. It will also do away with the problems experienced by Thai tour guides (Interview 17) who have to be re-trained by their employers. These useful working practices of Blue-Badge guides clearly provide guide trainees with valuable experience and information.

### *e) Training Philosophy*

The Director of Studies of Blue Badge guide training (Interview 18) said that:

"Our training philosophy is that the guide trainees must be both knowledgeable in guiding subjects and know how to effectively transmit it to their tourists. A guide's knowledge is useless if it can't be put over. So, the guide trainees have to undertake a complex practical task. They have to practice giving commentary on foot, at sites and on coaches over and over again, under the close supervision of experienced guide trainers who will comment constructively on their performance".

Furthermore, the guide trainees will extensively learn guiding topics, guiding techniques and communications skills. Apart from being encouraged to do a lot of self-study and research, they have to display their own guiding identity. A guide tutor (Interview 19 ) stressed that:

"The input is as important as the output, a guide candidate must be appropriately selected to ensure a satisfactory result".

Therefore, in the selection process, the pre-entry test is not the only criterion for judgement. The written examination aims not only to establish a certain minimum level of knowledge, but to give the candidates some indication of the ground covered in the guide training courses.

Consequently, to evaluate the eligibility of a candidate, the results of the test are taken into account together with general background, language(s) offered and experience (not necessarily within the field of tourism). The prospective candidates must have a wide knowledge of culture in general as well as about people and the tourism industry. However, their most significant asset is personality, which will be assessed at interview, as well as motivation. Generally, successful candidates will be invited for interview during mid-July each year. The interview will take approximately half an hour. The dates and times will be given to candidates within a week of the pre-entry test.



The researcher is convinced that initiative and individuality based on sound knowledge and professional techniques are essential to bring about the making of a professional, successful and popular guide (Interview 20).

***f) Organising Committee:***

Based on an interview with the Director of Studies (Interview 21 ), it is clear that the London Blue Badge guides' training programme is operated by a working staff of a Director of Studies and experienced guide trainers/lecturers. The London Tourist Board (LTB) employs a Director of Studies who is an experienced guide tutor. Being self-employed, the Director of Studies is responsible for organising the training programme and related activities in a businesslike manner. S/he has full authority and responsibility in running the programme in a way that would generate high quality guides and, at the same time, be able to financially support itself.

Though theoretically the Director of Studies could run the training programme independently, in practice she has to consult with the LTB on some major issues, i.e., the policy of guide selection and examination, the required quality of guide candidates and languages to be offered.

Briefly, on the one hand, the Director of Studies has to closely work with the LTB and work on behalf of the LTB in organising the training programme for Blue Badge guides. On the other hand, s/he has to work as a medium between the guide lecturers/guide trainers and guide trainees. The organising committee will design the training curriculum to satisfy the tourist markets, and organise the winter training programmes to add and improve the practising guides' current guiding knowledge. Aside from which the Director of Studies and team members would generally work both as guide tutors and administrators.

#### **5.4 Comparative Guide Training: A Critique**

Attempts have been made to draw a brief and precise comparison on guide training systems between Thailand and the UK based on the following features:

- **Organisers:** The UK Blue Badge Guides training courses are organised by experienced Blue Badge guides whereas the Thai

training courses are organised by inexperienced people or people with limited experience, namely academicians or university lecturers, among whom very few are tour guides or have completed guide training courses themselves.

- **Selection Committee:** In the UK, the interviewing panel were properly and carefully selected from suitable and relevant sources, such as the tourist board, the Guild of Guides Lecturers (tour guide association) (GGL), experienced guide trainers/lecturers and the Director of Studies (who is always a professional tour guide himself/herself). But in Thailand, most of them are ad hoc, academic/university lecturers from mainly language departments and, most importantly, do not include representatives from the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), nor the Professional Guide Association of Thailand (PGAT).
- **Guide Candidates' Profile:** In the UK, guide applicants are mainly personality and motivation-oriented, Thai guide applicants are to a greater extent linguistic-oriented.
- **Organisational Support.** In the UK, the guide training organisers receive good support and co-operation from the Guilds of Guide Lecturer (GGL), local/national tourist officials in terms of relevant representatives to join the selection committee. They also have good connections and relations with tour operators/travel agents and tourist sites regarding types of tour guides suitable for tourism markets. They do not receive financial assistance (barring occasional material support) from the national or local tourist boards.

By comparison, in Thailand, guide training organisers to a certain extent do receive material and financial support from the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), as well as helpful assistance concerning guest speakers from the Professional Tour Guide

Association of Thailand (PGAT), Tour operators and the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT).

- **Subjects taught:** Though having similar areas of subjects taught, such as visitor attractions, history, culture, arts, architecture, neither country offers or includes marketing-related subjects in their training curriculum. However, the UK guide training organisers have additionally offered their guide students accounting-oriented subjects, such as Finance and Taxation, English and Scottish Law. Whereas Thailand's guide training organisers have also offered their guide students additional subjects, namely hospitality and customs procedure.
- **Guide Training Emphasis:** The UK guide trainees have to learn considerable guiding techniques as well as communications. They have to do a lot of practical tasks, i.e. hands-on guiding practices. In this area, Thai guide trainees do not have to do a practical task as such, since Thai guide training organisers have not stressed this aspect owing to financial, personnel, and time constraints.
- **Time Frame:** The UK Blue Badge's guide training course encompasses two terms in two years (6 months per term/year), whereas in Thailand, the guide training course runs approximately for 12-16 weeks.
- **Training Philosophy:** In the UK, guide trainees are trained to a higher standard in both guiding knowledge and communications skills to become professional tourist guides. In Thailand, however, guide trainees are trained to have good guiding knowledge and be "proud" of the guiding profession. Furthermore, they are also trained to be good representatives of the country, as well as good tour guides, since in Thailand, tour guides are regarded as "Cultural Ambassadors" of the country.

- **Practical Task:** UK guides have to 'practice' guiding every weekend under close supervision of their experienced guide trainer/lecturer. Thai guides do not have this practice whilst being trained.
- **Examination:** The UK guide students have to undergo stringent written examination and practical task assessment before receiving their "Blue Badge". Their guiding knowledge and communication ability will be strictly judged through both 'coach' and 'on site' commentaries. Thai guide students are examined through a written examination and short slide or on site presentations.
- **Tour Guides' Recognition:** Highly recognised by their employers and other tourism-related parties, UK Blue Badge guide trainees are able to start work immediately in a professional manner after completing their training course. In Thailand, however, the vast majority of Thai guide trainees, after finishing their training course, have to be re-trained by their employers for approximately 3-24 months before being allowed to work as company's tour guides. Interestingly, all UK tour guides are self-employed. In comparison, a very small number of Thai guides are full-time workers, the rest being self-employed.
- **Guide Training Class Size:** Approximately, the UK's guide training class size ranges from 10 to 35 guide trainees per tutor, per year. Comparatively, Thai guide training class size is between 75 to 200 guide trainees per tutor, per year. The number of UK Blue-Badge and Thai guides completing their training course each year is in the region of 200 and 2,000 respectively.
- **Guide tutor/trainer/lecturer:** In the UK, the guide tutor is by and large an experienced guide who performs both as a guide trainer and guide lecturer. A guide trainer is generally an experienced tour guide

who teaches guiding knowledge and techniques, whereas a guide lecturer is a specialist who lectures in specific subjects such as arts, architecture, and history. In most cases, the UK Director of Studies of Blue Badge guides employs experienced Blue Badge tour guides to be guide tutors, specialists are invited occasionally. By contrast, very few - if any - Thai directors of studies of guide training employ experienced tour guides to be their guide lecturers. They mostly invite academicians to teach guiding knowledge, special subjects and language for guiding. Only occasionally will experienced tour guides be invited to give talks on specific topics.

- **Registering Bodies:** In the UK, Blue Badge tour guides are not required to be registered or legally licensed prior to working as guides. A Blue Badge is given to qualifying guide students by the guide training body itself. But in Thailand, the guide training body merely confers a guide training certificate to qualifying guide trainees, but is not authorised to issue a 'Guide ID'. All Thai tour guides have to be legally licensed by registering with the TAT who will then issue them a 'Guide ID' card. Effectively, the TAT is the only body responsible for authorising or revoking 'Guide ID' cards, not the guide training body. In addition, Thai guides have to renew their registration once bi-annually.
- **Refresher Courses & Related Programmes:** In the UK, apart from tour guiding-related seminars/workshops regularly held, refresher courses have consistently been offered to currently practising tour guides, and have proven successful. In Thailand, such courses and programmes have not yet been offered. Though refresher courses have been recently discussed among tourism bodies concerned, they still remain to be seen.

### **5.5 Conclusion**

It is evident that Blue Badge guide training courses of the U.K. has major remarkable differences from that of Thailand, particularly the guide training organisers who are all experienced Blue Badge tour guides themselves. In addition, guide training philosophy of U.K. Blue Badge tour guide has covered a reasonably long training period and seriously focussed on guiding practice; whereas guide training organisers in Thailand believe that a 12-16 weeks is sufficient and seem to ignore guiding practice. Therefore, it is not surprising that newly graduated Blue Badge tour guides are able to commence their guiding job on their first working day, In comparison, newly graduated Thai tour guides have to be re-trained by their employers for approximately 3-24 months before they can be trusted to do their guiding duty.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Preliminary Findings**

#### **Tour Guide Training in Thailand**

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This chapter covers the investigation of tour guide management in Thailand, as well as tour guide training organisers' philosophy. It explores various aspects of guide training system, including guide training advertisement, recruitment criteria and interviewing panels. In addition, pre-entrant and final examinations, major subjects taught and, last but not least, tuition fees are extensively studied.

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##### **6.1 Introduction**

Tour guide training in Thailand was firstly organised, over 30 years ago, by Chulalongkorn University in 1961, then followed by Chiangmai University in 1973, and Silpakorn University in 1974, respectively. It was the Tourism Authority of Thailand (T.A.T.)'s initiative to co-operate with the country's higher educational institutions, i.e., colleges, universities to run the guide training courses, hoping to increase the number of tour guides capable of coping with future tourism demand and, more importantly, to improve the standard of tour guides in Thailand. And since then, more and more university-based guide training organisers have applied to organise guide training programmes.

##### **6.2 Guide Training System in Thailand**

It has been seriously debatable as to whether tour guides need training to be good and efficient. In other words, the majority of tour guides still question the quality of and

to what extent tour guide training can contribute, because what has happened since the emergence of guide training programme, all new guides graduated have to be re-trained by their employers - tour operators/travel agents - before they can commence guiding or being allowed to show tourists around independently.

However, one of the merits of tour guide training is evidently the new breed of tour guides undergoing a systematic training. For those passing guide training course, it is no doubt that they had acquired some basic knowledge of guiding, though it was uncertain how many would pursue a guiding job.

### **6.3 Related Guide Training Act**

Until the proclamation of the Tourism Business and Guide Act in 1994, the majority of the practising tour guides in Thailand, as well as foreign tour guides/tour leaders, had freely done a guiding job without being properly monitored and licensed (Interview 1).

The original notion of this Act was to protect the image of the country and raise the quality and standard of tour guides, by stipulating that all tour guides must be Thai citizens and be licensed. In order to be licensed tour guides, they have to undertake a guide training course organised by government and private universities. The training course designed by those institutions must follow the guideline set by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (T.A.T.) and get approval by the T.A.T. prior to launching any advertising campaign. Upon passing their examinations, these newly graduated tour guides have to register with the T.A.T. to get a proper ID card to become qualified and licensed tour guides.

According to this Act (1994:3), a tour guiding is a profession reserved and restricted for Thai citizens, as well as for those qualified to have Thai citizenship. All tour guides must be licensed to be registered tour guides. Before getting a guiding license, however, they must undertake and pass a tour guide training course from authorised training institutes to get a guide training certificate. Though tour guide training courses have been organised over the last three decades by several academic institutions, such as Chulalongkorn, Silpakorn, Kasetsart, etc., there has yet a serious



notion of licensing and monitoring mechanism prior to the arrival of this Tourism Business and Guide Act (Interview 2).

#### **6.4 Guide Training Institutions**

Currently, 35 higher educational institutions, both government and private, have organised tour guide training in Thailand (T.A.T. Tour Guide Training Establishments Report 1997) with the joint co-operation from the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) for people interested to be trained as tour guides. However, for those institutions which offer a bachelor degree in Tourism and Hospitality course, their students will automatically receive a tour guide certificate from the TAT upon completion their studies.

#### **6.5 Preparation for Launching the Training Course**

In general, most guide training organisers require a period of between 3-6 months for guide training programme preparation (Interview 3 ). The training organisers such as universities and other higher educational institutions in Bangkok and major cities usually organise guide training courses during a university vacation (May-August) to avoid certain constraints, such as unavailability of classrooms, training materials and personnel.

Due to operational cost awareness, different approaches are being employed to acquire as many guide applicants as possible to assure that a successful programme will run. The majority of guide training organisers will advertise the training programmes approximately three months before the actual training commences (Interview 4).

#### **6.6 The Mass Media Used**

The most widely used media are the local magazines, newspapers, radio and television commercials. Flyers and posters detailing the training programmes are also put up in front of their campus. Some training organisers send training programme brochures to different sources, i.e., organisations and companies, as well as educational establishments (Interview 5). Others would also try to locate their former guide students, and request them to circulate the training course pamphlets. In some cases, distribution of such brochures and pamphlets can also be found in certain commercial or business areas.

### 6.7 Admission Criteria

Though the guide training syllabus must get approval from the Tourism Authority of Thailand (T.A.T.), guide training organisers can, nevertheless, establish their own selection criteria (Interview 6). By and large, written examination varies significantly from one training organiser to another, in terms of contents, depth and practicality. Nevertheless, successful guide applicants need to possess a sound and in-depth knowledge of Thai culture, history, arts and architecture.

One of the most important requirements of guide training organisers is that interested people must be Thai citizens. In order to prevent ineligible applicants, guide training organisers are extremely careful about guide applicants' supportive documents, i.e., a birth certificate, an identification card. This important evidence is used to provide evidence of Thai citizenship, especially, from guide applicants who were immigrants (Interview 7).

The prospective applicants are also required to fulfil minimum educational requirements of high school level or equivalent. Some guide training establishments require guide applicants to have a Bachelor's degree. It is believed that the higher educational level a guide applicant has, the better command of foreign language he or she possesses (Interview 8). It is also easier for them to assimilate other important knowledge and information necessary for a guiding career (Interview 9).

Before being accepted, guide applicants are initially screened through their application forms as to qualifications required. Thereafter they will be notified of the results. Guide applicants have to take pre-entry tests by written examination and interview. In general, the written examination includes language and guiding knowledge papers. In language papers, the applicants will be appraised as to their linguistic ability. In guiding knowledge papers, they will be tested about visitor attractions, history, and arts. The written examination aims to evaluate their existing linguistic ability for guiding, as well as their guiding knowledge and general information.

### 6.8 Entrance Examination Format

Guide applicants have to take an entrance examination including both written and interviewing, which is a standardised format for all those establishments receiving permission from the Tourism Authority of Thailand (T.A.T.) to organise a guide training course. They are described below:

#### *a) Written examination:*

The duration of the test is 3 hours and guide applicants will have to display their existing general knowledge in the following areas:

- *Thai history*, which covers arts, architecture, the origin of Thai people, and the influences of Thai dynasties on cultural development.
- *Thai culture*, which includes knowledge of Thai silk weaving, wedding ceremonies, Buddhism reformation and its implications, Thai Kings' wisdom, dedicated efforts and endeavours.
- *Fine arts*, which encompass sculpture and decoration regarding Buddha's statues and styles, Buddha's images, types, and related paintings.
- *Architecture*, which contains architects and artists' influences on temples, Royal palaces, Thai traditional houses, buildings, the interpretation and description of various mural paintings.

In written examination, guide applicants have to choose the correct answer, fill the blanks with suitable words, and/or give short answers. This general knowledge paper is in Thai, except for the language section, which is based on the guiding language chosen.

Tour guide applicants will also be examined in other areas, such as visitor attractions, visa and customs procedures. They are expected to be aware of the roles and

responsibilities of tourist guides, as well as some crucial general information about hospitals, police stations, embassies, etc.

*b) Interviews:*

After the written examination session, guide applicants will be interviewed for approximately 5-10 minutes. An interviewer will appraise their linguistic ability, personality, appearance and motivations. Each applicant will be rated according to the above categories, and the aggregated scores will be added to the written examination scores to be finalised. In Thailand, as foreign languages are not widely used, and few Thais speak any other languages fluently, guide applicants with good foreign language competency are preferred.

As a former Thai Director of Studies (Interview 10) lamented that:

"It is much more difficult to find guide applicants with good command of language than those with pleasant personality".

Some applicants, though they excel in the written examination, may be rejected owing to insufficiency in the key attributes previously mentioned. Most guide training organisers require that qualified guide applicants have a minimum of 50% of each session, or 60% of aggregated scores of both (Interview 11). Guide applicants who appear to be introverted, sombre or nervous will be failed, as they are deemed unsuitable for a guiding job, despite having done well in other areas (Interview 12).

The target number of applicants required varies from one training establishment to another. As a case in point, Thammasat University which has organised guide training courses for nearly a decade, required 112 candidates for the year 1998 (Interview 13). Of over 200 applicants who turned up for the written examination that morning, only approximately 170 guide applicants stayed put for the interview in the afternoon. Presumably those absent from the interview were aware that they did not do well in the written examination that morning.

From the remaining 170 applicants, 150 candidates were selected as they scored at least 50 % of both written examination and interview. Past experience showed that a

certain number of selected applicants did not turn up to pay training fees, so the actual number of selected applicants was 150, despite the target number being 112. The Director of Studies (Interview 14) emphasised that they had to turn up and pay training fees on the basis of "first come, first served".

*c) Training fees:*

Every training establishment sets training fees differently based on several factors, such as the reputation of the training centre itself, as well as that of the guide lecturers, the number of required candidates, administrative and other expenses. For Thammasat University's training programmes in 1998, the fee for a 16-18 week training course was 13,000 Baht (£216, which £1=60 Baht) covering everything from tuition fees to field trips (all meals and accommodation included), Silpakorn University (Interview 15) charged 8,500 Baht (£141), Kasetsart University (Interview 16) charged 7,500 Baht (£125).

Though the training fee charged by one training establishment is nearly as twice as that of the others, a guide applicant (Interview 17) has strongly affirmed that:

"I am willing to pay because I believe that guides completing courses from here are more recognised than from other places".

Apart from the faith in the course content and the quality of guest speakers, this particular applicant has revealed further that:

"I can be assured that after graduating from here, there will be no problem in getting a guiding job. I heard that this university has a good training system and training staff. So, I think it is a worthwhile investment".

The Director of Studies (Interview 18) has also confirmed that the guide trainees who finished training courses had no difficulty in getting a job.

Owners of tour operating companies (Interview 19) were quoted as saying that:

"We admit that guides graduating from different training institutions vary considerably in terms of quality. The quality of guide trainees from this university is quite satisfactory, and much better than other training institutions' guides".

But in all cases, they have to be re-trained by their employers for approximately 3 - 24 months before being allowed to guide independently.

*d) Length of the programme:*

In most cases, guide training courses last for a period of approximately 12 weeks. But at Thammasat University the guide training period takes about 16-18 weeks (Interview 20) to cover a re-sit and graduation ceremony. The lecturing time covers 6 days a week, from Monday to Saturday, from 1800-2030 hrs. Both short and long distance field trips take place on certain Saturdays and Sundays within and outside Bangkok. This is a comparatively strenuous training course whereas most training institutions adopt a weekend-only approach, which means the guide trainees will study from 9-5 p.m. every Saturday and Sunday.

*e) Training philosophy:*

Guide candidates are required to possess a pleasant personality and have a good command of language for guiding (Interview 21). However, given the fact that the 'Thai' language is the country's official language and English is not widely used, few Thais could efficiently use any other foreign languages. Not surprisingly, all training establishments tend to weigh linguistic ability versus personality traits. An experienced guide lecturer (Interview 22 ) asserts that it would be much easier for guide trainees to be trained in terms of knowledge assimilation and expansion.

Another Director of Studies (Interview 1) insisted that:

"We look for candidates with language skills first and foremost since it is very difficult for us to teach language to guide trainees. They will also slow other guide students, not only teachers. We admit that good personality is also important, but we have to prioritise language ability by all means".

Therefore, some applicants despite having a pleasant personality will be rejected on grounds of language insufficiency (Interview 2 ).

Nevertheless, the researcher maintains that guide trainees' personality should come first because language will be improved through guiding experience and time (Interview 3). Personality in this context covers important characteristics such as attitudes, sensitivity, a sense of humour and leadership. In general, tour Guide applicants do not necessarily have to have all of the above traits. If they have some or a little of each, it should be sufficient for further development through the systematic training process (Interview 4). Furthermore, tour operators (Interview 5) maintain that language can always be taught, and that it is easier to acquire guides with good language than with good personality.

Another tour guide employer (Interview 6) put it that:

"Leadership is one of the significant attributes we are looking for, it is much more important than knowledge or experience".

*f) Organising committee:*

In Thailand, guide-training programmes have been organised by higher educational establishments, i.e., government and private universities.

A Director of Studies (Interview 7 ) says that:

"We have organised the training, because we regard it as part of a university's duties in contribution and distribution of knowledge, and in educating the public. So we do not focus on making profit. It is some sort of service that our university can give to society".

These training organisers tend to organise a guide training course on a non-profit making basis rather than profit-orientated one (Interview 8). The majority of Guide training programmes are generally run by a working staff consisting of a Director of Studies (who is a lecturer) and a few other lecturers from different departments.

Directors of Studies of guide training programmes do not receive any extra money or income for their efforts. The proceeds from the course will be credited to their university to be used for good courses (Interview 9).

Few Directors of Studies and their working staff have had guiding experience or completed guide-training courses themselves. Senior lecturers assigned to head the organising committee would field their own staff comprising lecturers from language faculty (Interview 10). Worth noting is that none of them includes a representative from the Professional Guide Association of Thailand (PGAT) or the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT). The reasons are twofold:

- To include an outsider (especially from the PGAT or the TAT) will be inferred by the outsiders as implying that the institution's staff are not fully qualified as guide training organisers.
- The Professional Guide Association of Thailand (PGAT) and the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) do not want to be seen as having interfered with guide training organisers.

### **6.9 Current Trend of Tour Guides**

Worth noting is that the number of registered tour guides nation wide does not seem to be equally distributed. The majority of registered tour guides is located in Bangkok (Central region), whereas the number of registered tour guides in the Northern and Southern regions seems to have a narrow gap. However, the gap between the number of registered tour guides in the North-eastern region and the others, particularly the Central region, is significantly wide.

It is clearly seen (TAT's Tour Guide Statistics, 2001) that, throughout the country, the figure of registered tour guides is 21,274. Out of this number, 14,620 is in Bangkok, 3,264 and 2,782 is located in the Northern and Southern regions, respectively. Interestingly, only 608 is located in the North-eastern region of Thailand.



### 6.10 Tour Guide Category

The number of tour guides based on their ID card category can be classified as follows:

**Table 7: Tour Guide Classification and Number**

<b>Guide Classification</b>	<b>Number of Tour Guide</b>
<b>General tour guide:</b>	
• Inbound guide (foreign language)	17,750
• Domestic guide (Thai language)	911
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,661</b>
<b>Specialist tour guide:</b>	
• Inbound guide (Specific area)	1,116
• Domestic guide (Specific area)	255
• Trekking guide	307
• Arts & Cultural guide	2
• Marine guide	N/A
• Coastal sea guide	763
• Natural attractions guide	153
• Local Culture guide	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,631</b>

(Source: T.A.T. Registration Report, 31 March 2001)

From the figures above, a sharp contrast is evident relative to the number of inbound and domestic tour guides. The number of foreign visitors has consistently increased every year (Table 6) and convinced the government tourist organisation that to have more inbound tour guides is sensible. Therefore, it is not surprising that in the last ten years, the number of guide training organisers have considerably increased.

However, it does not necessarily imply that all guide training organisers would be producing the same result - effective tour guides - since each has tried to guard their

courses secret each year to prevent others to imitate their subjects taught and fieldwork undertaking. At the same time, a number of them will issue their guiding manual for their guide students as well as for public sale to ensure a more profitable income and training credibility.

### **6.11 Guide Gender & Education**

In the past three decades, the number of female tour guides is in the region of 25%, but at present, 52% of tour guides are men and the remaining 48% are women (TAT Tour Guide Statistics, 1998). It is not uncommon, therefore, for women nowadays to be working as female tour guides since guiding is a job where good connections could be easily established and, in some important ways, offer them various exciting opportunity in the future, i.e., setting up a guiding business, travel agent or even tour operating company.

In addition, a lot of them have just graduated and jobs are also difficult to find, it is sensible to invest 12-16 weeks' time plus training fees to equip them with some basic guiding knowledge. After passing guiding examination and registering themselves with the Tourism Authority of Thailand (T.A.T.), they can take on guiding job legally as being self-employed or freelancers while waiting for another job.

It is remarkably interesting to find that up to 41% of tour guides in Thailand has a bachelor's degree or higher educational background; whereas the remaining 59% has a lower than Bachelor's degree educational background. This is mainly due to the requirement of the 1992's Tourism Business and Guide Act, which has stipulated that guide candidates must possess at least senior high school certificate or higher to be eligible for applying to take a guide training course.

### **6.12 Language Guides**

Of all the inbound tour guides in Thailand (TAT Tour Guide Statistics, 2001), those who are able to use English language for guiding account for 23,558, followed by Chinese language (7,120) Japanese language (5,875), French language (3,493) and German language (1,496), respectively. However, Korean and Spanish language guides constitute 579 and 561, respectively. Interestingly, Russian language is being

used by only 202 tour guides and, last but not least, other languages are altogether used by 1,242 tour guides.

The reason that English language has become the most popular medium for guiding could probably be attributable to the fact that English is the first foreign language most Thais study at school and, to a greater extent, a number of other language tour guides could also use English as their third language. It is undeniable that inbound tour guides who could guide in more than two or more languages are the most sought-after and, invariably, can earn significantly more than those who can guide in only one foreign language.

### **6.13 Conclusion**

Despite Thailand has a consistent increase of number of international visitor arrivals every year, a number of qualified tour guides does not seem to grow proportionately. The management of guide training in Thailand seems to lack proper systematic training approach, given the fact that the training had started over 30 years ago. Each training institution has full autonomy in their training operation without any supervision from the T.A.T. In addition, they have their own management criteria and standard in selecting suitable guide candidate, guide lecturer, training fees and examinations. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (T.A.T.) would not interfere after giving those institutions approval for fear of not receiving co-operation in the future.

Key factors contributing to the low quality of guides, to say the least, cover the relatively short period training, no guiding practice, a large class size and, most importantly, guide training organiser's insufficiency of guiding experience staff. Moreover, with a lack of adequate monitor and control from the government's tourism body, how could the Tourism Authority of Thailand's objectives be accomplished remains to be seen.

## Chapter 7

### Preliminary Findings

#### Tour Guide Employment

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**This chapter attempts to explore the history and development of tour guide employment in Thailand. Characteristics and nature of guiding job relating to tour guides themselves are studied, as well as tour guiding-related problems and possible solutions. Besides, source of income, its implications and, last but not least, chief factors contributing to the failure and success of guiding are illustrated.**

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##### 7.1 Introduction

It has to be admitted that the academic literature concerning tour guiding is rather limited. This is partly attributable to the fact that this type of career has not been much recognised by the general public and also because, compared with other careers, a guiding job is not as secure and promotable. Moreover, the public perception is also wary about tour guiding as a career. Pond (1993) rightly points out how tour operators and travel agents, despite their admission about its significance as being able to 'make or break the tour', do not pay adequate fees to guides.

Indeed, though low guiding fees remain prevalent in many countries, particularly in Thailand, little has been done to rectify this problem and, curiously, few tour guides really bother to raise this controversial issue. Comparatively, the UK's Blue Badge tour guides seem to be exceptional thanks to their high going-rate, but, as with any

other competitive profession, during the off peak season, a certain number of them have to lower their guiding fees despite having fee guidelines from the Guilds of Guide Lecturers. Additionally, tour guides with years of working experience still receive the same amount of basic rate as new and inexperienced ones (Pond, *ibid.*).

## **7.2 History**

Tour guides since the early phase of tourism history were notorious for their nuisance, being troublemakers, opportunists or even con people. Travellers paid these tour guides for their services such as to ensure safety, interpret tourist attractions and to get them accommodation. It is not surprising that these kinds of tour guides are now still prevalent in many parts of the world, especially developing countries.

## **7.3 Guide Employment**

The majority of tour guides in the UK and Thailand are freelancers; very few, if any, being full timers. This is partly because many tour guides prefer to have more freedom in choosing to work for numerous tour operators/travel agents, and partly because tour operators or travel agents could not afford to hire full time tour guides due to the seasonal nature of tourism. Only a handful of established tour operators which have visitors more regularly might have one or two full timers to work both as administrative and stand-by tour guides.

## **7.4 Advantage and Disadvantage**

The advantage of being full timers for some tour guides is obvious: job security. By comparison, free-lancers may find it more difficult than full-timers to get a guiding job during the low tourist season. Therefore, most of them have to find some other job such as teaching music or English, secretariat or sales assistant. These free-lancers have to work very hard and make as much money in the peak-tourist season to compensate for the time when they have no tours.

## **7.5 Status and Recognition**

In Thailand a tour guiding is often regarded by many as a somewhat cunning way of exploiting tourists specifically foreign visitors. Stories of visitors from Taiwan, Hong Kong especially from the China mainland, who were frequently being ripped off, often appear on the press and other mass media. To some, tour guiding is sometimes

thought of as a career without dignity and morals resulting in tour guides being seen as unethical people. To others, it is deemed as a glamorous, dream job (Pond, 1993).

Unlike other professional jobs such as accounting, medicine or law which require their practitioners to have a minimum educational standard requirement and to be rigorously trained and educated before starting their job, a tour guiding career in Thailand requires approximately 12-14 weeks for the training including a guiding practice—if any. This short training time is related to the expenses involved (hiring coach, professional guide); thus few guide training institutions focus on practical guiding exercises. An experienced Thai tour guide (Interview 1) trainer has maintained that:

"The training fees must be significantly raised and training period be lengthened if practical guiding exercise is to be addressed".

However, another (Interview 2 ) has argued that:

"New guide graduates can gain actual guiding experience by working after graduation with tour operators and travel agents. Even if the tour guide students received practical guiding training, they would have to be retrained by their employers".

Until 1974, anyone with a certain ability in a foreign language could become or act as a tour guide in Thailand. They merely acquired books about visitor attractions, learnt information by heart and went to places where foreigners were available such as hotels, visitor attractions or even airport; touting their services prospective customers. The entrance to a tour guiding job was not difficult even for poorly-educated people was required though they hardly spoke any foreign languages at all.

Apart from *commissions* obtained, the feelings of pride and dignity was also prevalent as an experienced tour guide (Interview 3 ) put it:

"The way I started my guiding career 30 odd years or so ago after coming back from overseas was to approach some foreign visitors at Wat Pra

Kaew, officially known as the Temple of the Emerald Buddha. Prior to becoming a tour guide, I went to Spain to learn some sort of degree and ended up getting some sort of diploma. After coming back to Thailand, I had nothing interesting to do and realised that my Spanish language gradually disappeared because I did not have a chance to practice. Later a friend asked me to show Spanish tourists around and I accepted the invitation immediately because I wanted to brush up my Spanish. After working as a tour guide in those days where very few people could speak English, let alone Spanish, I enjoyed it very much because I liked meeting people especially foreign visitors, improving my language and the tips were very good".

Some tour guides in those days had improved their guiding techniques by self-teaching and long years of guiding experience, as well as mastering the language used for guiding. It is appropriate to emphasise that three decades ago in Thailand national education standards were not universal and very few people had the opportunity to go to schools. Although the majority of those practising guides only attained a very basic level of formal educational level, i.e., primary or secondary school, many of them later on became excellent and respectable tour guides in the Thai tourism industry. Among them, some are now the owners or presidents of the biggest tour operators or travel agents in Thailand.

## **7.6 Guide Motivations**

People who take on a guiding job come from various and diverse backgrounds such as teachers, police, office workers, government officials, unemployed people and people between jobs, as well as students. Most of them expect good financial returns in addition to having the opportunity to socialise with foreign visitors while escorting them around. Other prime motivations include gratuities like 'commissions' and 'tips'. All tour guides whom the author had interviewed admitted that 'commission' is essentially the most significant reason that they become tour guides. The guiding fee is hardly significant and they would be happy to work even without it as long as a guiding job is available.

Tourists will generally behave differently at a destination from how they behave at home. It is also true that foreign visitors normally spend much more while on holiday abroad than on domestic holidays. Therefore, every single foreign tourist is usually regarded by the local people as a rich person by the Thais' standard of living. Clearly, the amount of money tourists spend largely depends on the types of tourists and holidays taken; not all tourists are big spenders and, rich though they are willing to spend all of their whole year hard-earned income for their holiday.

Thirty years ago in Thailand, there were very few foreign tourists around. Many were foreign business people, American soldiers on leave or foreign backpackers. However, while visiting various sites and being offered to be shown around by those "guides", these tourists' experiences were undoubtedly enhanced, and thus they gave the guides good "tips" for their guiding services.

Some of these tour guides had successfully, to a certain extent, established good rapport with their customers and were trusted to take them to buy valuable souvenir items before going back home. This gave the early Thai guides a good opportunity to discover the unexpected bottomless source of income in "commissions", which later became one of the most vital motivations - if not the only key element - for people wanting to become tour guides. An experienced Thai female tour guide (Interview 4 ) has elaborated that:

"To walk side by side and able to 'talk' with foreign visitors was something like a symbol of pride, because in those days there were very few 'Farangs' or 'White' people in Thailand. The Thais reckoned that these 'Farangs' were being civilised and coming from developed countries. So when you were seen walking and talking with them, you can't help feeling sort of proud and respected".

In addition, a further comment was made that:

"But if a woman was seen walking along a male foreigner, she would be looked down upon because only a prostitute would do that. That's why tour guiding hardly attracted any women during the early phase of this



career. However, things have changed considerably, though gradually, and such attitudes of the locals rarely exist nowadays".

Apart from such overwhelmingly mixed feelings between pride and the respect obtained when tour guides showed foreign visitors around, they were later also offered 'commission' by tourism-related businesses such as souvenir, jewellery shops, accommodation or entertainment establishments for bringing in foreign customers. The practice of offering commission was a result of intensive competition among tourism business at the advent of the surge of tourists' arrivals, which meant that more tourists from different countries started to visit Thailand.

Tour guiding has thus offered tour guides a golden opportunity to make an excellent income from good tips and commissions as well as to gain admiration from their countrymen. Further more, thanks to the tourists influx, taxi drivers or even "Tuk-Tuk"(three-wheeled motorbike) drivers were to be offered incentive and commission for bringing in any "Farang" customers. They would get about £3 per head/customer even if no purchase was made, and another 10-25 % commission on top of the items purchased.

Later, the number of better-educated people taking a guiding job included those who already had a full time job but initially took a guiding job as a sideline. This practice gradually increased. It was, and is, not uncommon even today that many white collar workers resigned from their job and took up guiding job to earn their living. Unsurprisingly, being self-employed as tour guides has enabled them to afford to get and own things they dreamed of much faster such as a car, a house, or land and property which they had hardly thought possible before.

The author believes that the trend which more people would take a guiding job as their first or second income earner has become fashionable and prevalent among the later generations of tour guides, most of whom put financial gains as their first priority. One of the Thai guide training organisers (Interview 5 ) said:

"We heard clearly from one of the female guide trainees talking to her friends that, '...make as much money out of the tourists as possible

whenever the opportunity presents itself', so we made it clear in our policy that we must adhere strictly the code of ethics for our guide students to realise the consequences and implications if they want to make 'quick' money. Having said that, once they complete their course and go to the real world of guiding, God knows what'll happen".

Though a tour-guiding career can make a substantial amount of income for tour guides in a short period of time in the general public's perspective, it is still doubtful whether and how its positive recognition can ever be achieved. Most people consider that although the job pays good money, this is earned at their customers' expense. There are many doubts about whether a tour guiding is a moral and ethical career.

### **7.7 Tricks of the Trade**

Worthing noting is that in the past, it seemed that many people could become tour guides though they hardly spoke English at all. How could then these "tour guides" communicate with their tourists, let alone showing them around and explaining to them about cultures and visitor attractions. Perseverance and perseverance alone matters; they initially had to learn by heart some basic English sentences such as 'Hello, my name is...; Where are you from?; What is your name? May I help you? Where are you going?' With one or two simple sentences to start with, they would write only the pronunciation in Thai (because they might not even know how to write the alphabet), coupled with self-confidence in trying to use "unconventional" sign language.

Then they would look for their potential 'victim' who might be walking along the street or studying their map at the bus stops. Once spotting them, these novice tour guides would immediately approach them and initiate the conversation based on the above 'chatting line' which worked most of the time. After years of trials and errors, their language skills were gradually developed and crystallised, and supplemented by self-taught guiding knowledge and techniques; they became more and more self confident, and many of these guides were later the role models for the younger generation in terms of perseverance, wealth and achievement in their guiding career.

### 7.8 Incentive

One of the most controversial issues in tour guiding is undoubtedly about gratuities, which cover both tips and commissions. The notion of giving tips has existed in, and developed from, western and European culture and spread to other cultures, especially in the East. Nevertheless, the amount of tips vary from country to country even among those developed countries, whereas non-western tourists seem to seldom practice tipping.

It is interesting to note that among foreign visitors giving tips to tour guides, the Americans are the most generous tippers. A Thai tour guide (Interview 6 ) has firmly advocated that:

"We tour guides generally get more tips from American tourists than any others. The second big tippers are German and those from the Scandinavian countries. Non-European tourists generally give a very small tip, if any".

### 7.9 Gratuities

In Thailand, financial returns come in the forms of tips from tourists; commission from tourist-related businesses and optional tours. These play a more significant role than job satisfaction in encouraging people to become tour guides. But there are also a few tour guides who do enjoy the guiding job regardless of financial returns because they like meeting people, particularly foreign tourists, and have a passion for the language and the country's natural and cultural attractions. By being tourist guides, they can, apart from brushing up and improving their competency in the guiding language (be it English, French, German....), travel at the same time (Interview 7).

Some pointed out that they like the nature of the guiding job in the sense that it is non-routine and exciting, though of course it is sometimes pressurising and stressful, because on some extended excursion, they have to work continuously 7-14 days depending on where and when they are accompanying their tourists. For example, if they take their tourists to the North which is about 500 miles from Bangkok (the capital of Thailand) during the high season where along the way there are many historical sites for the tourists to visit, let alone the trekking or visiting the hill-tribe

habitants, it certainly takes them at least 10-14 days. Yet, they still find the guiding job appealing and rewarding.

Very few tourist guides can really depend on their guiding income alone, given the fact that the average going rate for a half-day guiding fee is only 175 Baht (£3), and for a full-day guiding fee is 350 Baht (£6). Most tour operators would not have full-time guides because tourism is seasonal and this would not be cost effective. Thus guides in Thailand are part timers and freelancers, and very few are self-employed. Since guiding competition is very strong and the supply of guides (English-speaking guides) is much higher than market demand, guides can hardly have much bargaining power in a going-rate negotiation with their employers. Though most tour guides are freelancers, a tour guide lucky enough to be hired full time as a standby guide earns a basic salary (1998) of 3,000 to 5,000 Baht (£50 - £85). Besides getting ready to stand in for an absent guide, during low season when they have no guiding job, full time guides also have to help do other administrative and secretarial duties in the office as well.

#### **7.10 Tips and Commissions**

In many countries, particularly developing ones, it is not uncommon for tour guides to accept "commissions" and to regard them as their major sources of guiding income. Apart from taking "tips" from tourists which is an extremely common practice in most countries, commissions secured from tourist-related businesses in Thailand such as jewellery shops, entertaining districts, restaurants, etc. vary from 10 - 25 % depending on the types of services and value of the merchandise bought. Both tips and commissions are generally divided between the guide and coach driver on a 50/50 or 70/30 basis (Interview 8).

It has been debatable as to whether taking commission is an appropriate practice. However, it has to be clarified as to what is "appropriate" or "inappropriate". One of the experienced tour guides said that: (Interview 9)

"The tourists are not convinced or persuaded to buy. But if they decide to buy anything which has a clear label of fixed price, then 10-25 % of its

price is given to me. It is something like the special discounts given to a guide as an incentive instead of giving directly to the purchaser"

If taking commissions is considered inappropriate, then the question here is why is it so? Another tour guide (Interview 10) went so far as to say that:

"If the tourists come unaccompanied, they still have to pay the full price fixed on the items, anyway. It could, to a certain extent, damage the host countries' reputation if tourists are being ripped off".

It is elaborated (Interview 11) that there are certain advantages for the consumer in that the merchandise is guaranteed to be authentic, and that if something goes wrong with what was purchased, the guide and his company would be responsible for rectifying the situation by getting it exchanged or refunded (even if the tourist had already returned home).

By contrast, UK Blue Badge tour guides are critical with taking commissions. Some tour guides (Interview 12) even feel that they are so professional that they are not supposed to receive "tips" from their visitors. However, the most important thing is that they like to be regarded as professional tour guides and that their guiding fees are reasonably good.

It has to be mentioned here that shops or tourist-related businesses in the UK do not compete in the same way as those in Thailand. They do not employ a "commission" basis strategy. Only a handful of them would provide "free" tea and snacks to tour guides taking visitors there. This does not necessarily imply that all tourist-related businesses in the UK or other European countries are "commission free". It is most likely that restaurants and shops in the UK whose owners are non-British may reward, to a certain extent, tour guides with this incentive system. For instance, some shops in France and Switzerland have given a commission to Thai tour leaders. One of them (Interview 13) said:

"It is a common practice for us to get about 10% commission from what our tourists bought. Some shops give 3-5 % if the purchase is not much.

I was told by the shop owners that the commission is a discount given to tour guides instead of to my tourists".

Clearly, the idea of giving and taking commission is not unacceptable provided that there is no "mark-up" price on the items bought, and that those visitors get the genuine products with a reasonable price. But it would be totally unethical for some tour guides and businesses to "cheat" and "rip off" their tourists.

## **7.11 Commission Issue**

### **7.11.1 Guide Commission in Thailand**

There are generally five types of commission earned by tour guides in Thailand (Interview 14 ):

- A commission from selling an optional tour which will normally account for 10% of the overall excursions sold
- A commission from the overall purchase made at shops ranging from 10-30 % depending on the merchandise category,
- A commission from restaurants varying between 10-20 % based on the types of restaurants and meals served,
- A commission from entertainment establishments such as massage parlour which could be as high as 30-50% of the overall service charged and,
- A commission from tourist activities in theme parks such as riding an elephant or from a trekking tour which accounts for 10 % of the charges.

Tour guides generally get 10 per cent out of the optional tours sold to their visitors and 10-25 per cent from jewellery shops, depending on the prices and types of the goods. In Thailand, with the exception of goods or merchandise in certain established superstores, bargaining is so common that nearly all vendors of goods of all types

have to mark up high enough to make sure that they still make some profit after being bargained. Inevitably, tour guides have to depend on other sources of income because they do not have a basic salary or social welfare subsidy. They have a rather low guiding fee, ranging from Baht 250 (£4) per a half-day trip of 3-4 hours or £8 for a full-day trip of 6-8 hours. They might earn a substantial amount if they can entice their visitors to purchase other 'optional tours' available. Besides, some may be lucky enough to receive 'tips' from their audience occasionally.

However, if they take visitors on a 'long trip' to various tourist attractions, such as to the North of Thailand for 7-10 days, a lump sum as a tip always materialises. Most, if not all, tourism-related businesses namely restaurants, accommodation, souvenir shops, entertainment activities in theme parks visited, i.e., riding on an elephant or scuba diving, etc. will certainly give tour guides 10-15 per cent commission. Undoubtedly, most tour guides are pleased with their earnings and hope that this will compensate for the lack of pay in low season when they may or may not have any guiding work at all.

#### **7.11.2 Guide Commission in the UK**

By contrast, the UK's Blue Badge tour guides do not generally get involved in taking commission as Thai guides do; not least because shops and tourists-related businesses do not give commission to guides to bring in customers. Though competition is also very high between these guides and non-Blue Badge guides, tour operators wanting good quality tour guides opt for Blue Badge ones. However, the majority of tour operators in England would try to cut costs by hiring non-Blue Badge ones due to their much lower guiding fees.

As far as taking a commission is concerned, a Blue-Badge tour guide (Interview 15) has said that:

"It is no doubt that taking commission is actually a breach of our code of ethics. Given the guiding fees earned together with tips, Blue Badge guides in big city where there are tourists all year round like London can live comfortably without needing to resort to other sources of income – if any".

Besides, another tour guide (Interview 16) has emphatically pointed that:

"I think that taking any types of commission is very unprofessional and unethical. I've never personally come across any shop offer a commission. It would be very bad for them to offer and for us to get involved, too".

Briefly, not only did the Blue Badge tour guides disagree with the practice of taking commission of all kinds, they also deemed it unprofessional and unethical. Two main reasons were:

- a) Most – if not all – Blue Badge guides regarded their guiding career as a second income,
- b) Their motivations for becoming tour guides, apart from enjoying the chance of meeting people, was their passion of their country's heritage and history, and d) their guiding fee is reasonably high and no tourist-related businesses in the UK would offer such a commission as those in Thailand.

### **7.12 Employment of Good Guide**

A tour guiding is one of the services that tour operators/travel agents compete to offer to their visitors and prospective customers, and quality service of their tour guides must be their first priority. It has to be remembered that the tourist-receiving countries' image is largely dependent on tour guides' perception of their guiding career. Selwyn (1993:158) asserts that tour guides have been regarded as 'heroes' thanks to their skills, which help achieve a high quality visitor experience. These skills include leadership, good communication, and the ability to effectively lead and build good rapport with their group tour which are welcomed by their employers who include tour operating companies and travel agents.

With the notion that tour guiding efficiency significantly contributes to the development of tourism, emphasis has been placed on the quality of tour guiding and



services. The provision of these services will play an important role in creating a good impression and satisfaction among tourists who would encourage friends and relatives to travel with the same operator.

Undoubtedly, this also creates expectations among the potential tourists about the quality of guiding services. Only companies that hire good and effective tour guides will be in a better position to survive and do well. Bodlender (1991:169) agrees with this, pointing out that:

"The development of tourism, to a country or region involves the provision of a multitude of interdependent services".

### **7.13 Tour Guide and the Country's Image**

A case study conducted by Horwath Consulting (Bodlender, *ibid.*) suggests that the negative image of Thailand perceived by foreign visitors had dramatically affected certain tourist markets, particularly the family market in certain European countries (1991:172). The problem of Thailand's image is one of the complex and topical issues that needs to be taken in its context in relation to political, economic, socio-cultural and environmental factors. However, this is beyond the scope of this chapter. The author merely desires to point out certain inherent elements here in the content of a discussion on tour guiding.

The researcher had interviewed Thai tour guides (Interview 17), who admitted that they found it rather awkward to explain socio-political issues to their tourists since they are expected to represent their country in a positive manner. Besides, their employers including mainly tour operators/travel agents (Interview 18) prefer them to refrain from all controversial and sensitive issues that will have a negative impact on the country and its tourism industry.

Nevertheless, some tour guides are pleased to be asked about these issues by their tourists, one (Interview 19 ) pointing out that:

"I'm glad that some of my tourists asked me about problems that they have heard from their friends or perceived from the mass media in their

country before coming to Thailand, because this is actually the golden opportunity to explain to them why we have these 'problems' which also occur elsewhere in many other countries, not only in Thailand".

Such debatable issues have, in fact, chronically affected Thailand's reputation for some considerable time and, unfortunately, they have not been seriously and consistently enough dealt with by individuals and parties concerned. Foreign tourists coming to Thailand often want more background information about the country, including such matters of interest, and learning about the country, in addition to being shown different tourist attractions. Whatever the motivations of their travellers, tour guides are perhaps the first and only local people they come into contact with during their visits, and they need to use the opportunity which has presented itself for them to convey a balance of appropriate information to their tourists.

#### **7.14 Moment of Truth**

It is no doubt that tour guides can significantly enhance his/her visitors experience since the interaction between tour guides and their customers are very intense and intimate. The "Moment of Truth" (Carlzon, 1987) has suggested that tour guides are also at the forefront of the service industry to meet and serve their customers. During their tours, tour guides may create positive or negative impression among their visitors who come from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Those with personal touch, good commentary and sense of leadership will obviously account for their achievement and the success of the tours. An experienced tour guide (Interview 20) said that:

"It is far better for us to be able to build up good relations with our tourists if they are with us for a longer period of time. Half or full day tour is not enough even for tourists to get to know each other because they only want to see as much as they can, and don't have time to talk to one another. To me, the longer trip or 'tour around' is very ideal because it enables both guide and tourists, and among tourists themselves to get to know each other better and, most importantly, we can relate and communicate much more effectively".

### **7.15 Tour Guiding: a Viable Career?**

Though tour guiding, as a career, is highly dependent on seasonality, demand and supply, and the level of quality and training of tour guides themselves (Pond, 1993), it is not surprising to find that there are more and more people interested in becoming tour guides in Thailand. There are two key reasons: Firstly, the expected good tips and commissions; Secondly, the country's economic crisis which resulted in more than three million people being unemployed. These unemployed people had to resort to guiding job which allows them to have more autonomy.

### **7.16 Tour Guiding Business Establishment**

By contrast, in the UK, people become tour guides owing to their appreciation of the country's heritage, job satisfaction and, to a certain extent, good income. Some UK Blue-Badge guides, after gaining years of guiding expertise and tourism experience, have successfully established their own booking agencies. Two classic examples may be quoted, Cross, D. of Salisbury's 'WessexPlore'; Nicola Evan's 'Cumbria Travel Agent'. Both are veteran tour guides who saw their tour guiding experience as a stepping stone to running their own business and wanted to move forward. They regularly get tour bookings from tour operators in countries like New Zealand, Canada and Australia who request only the service of Blue Badge tour guides. Both initially struggled – as any newcomers in any business – but eventually managed to succeed. Such enterprises need to have good connections in the first place. If overseas tourists receive quality service from their tour guides, the agencies establish a good reputation which results in repeat bookings from around the world all year round. Such agencies prove that training as a tour guide can lead to a prosperous career.

### **7.17 Business Limitations**

However, it could be argued that these are exceptional cases. Few Blue-Badge guides are capable of establishing themselves successfully and developing a business. Barriers to entry include the need for large initial outlays in terms of a good location for their working office, coach hire expenses, office staff and necessities such as a fax machine, computer, telephone, etc. It is theoretically possible to start with modest expenditure and then gradually increase as business builds up. Yet, there is a huge pressure involved if they want to minimise costs by considering the running of a

business with a tour-guiding job. To a certain extent, both cases cited above have been fortunate since they have partners who are also tour guides, in addition to the ability to minimise start-up costs by using their home as an offices.

The author firmly believes that most, if not all, tour guides want to progress further from being employees to having their own business such as those in the above-cited cases. However, as it turned out, some do strive to be successful whereas the others fail owing to the industry's strong competitiveness.

### **7.18 Factors Contributing to Successful Business**

It has to be said that among these Blue-Badge guides who have developed themselves to be tour booking agencies, only those with good marketing skills and financial resources survive and do well in the long term. Therefore, the majority of tour guides are both happy and willing to work as freelancers despite the irregular nature of a guiding job and inconsistent income. Tour guides in big cities like London, Bath and York with tourists the whole year round are more fortunate than other fellow guides since they have more incoming tourists and a more consistent income.

There is a parallel line with some Thai tour guides who also turned to be so successful that they set up their own travel agents/tour operating companies. Some later became the country's largest tour operating companies' chairman/owners. These included prominent tour guides working since the beginning of the Thai tourism industry over the past three decades. They developed good marketing strategies and connections which were instrumented in deciding to establish a small travel agency offering tour guiding and air ticketing services. Such operations were usually started with a very modest financial outlay and, as tourist arrivals increased, they gradually expanded their office branches and staff. Since there was little competition then in the tour operating business, those 'visionary' tour guides had rapidly exploited their opportunity and circumstances. However, a question arises: Could they do it under the present scenario and circumstances?

### **7.19 Factors Contributing to Failed Business**

An interview with a dynamic and versatile tour guide (Interview 21) during the author's fieldwork in Thailand clearly demonstrated the overwhelming difficulty, which exists today for someone wishing to establish his own tour company/travel agency. Having been a very successful tour guide himself over the past 15 years, he decided to start his own guiding business. Great efforts had been made to compete with those established tour operators/travel agents, but he ceased his operation after one year for financial reasons and later worked as a tour guide again. Later, he was contacted to be a partner and work as an operational/marketing manager for another travel agency thanks to his tour guiding quality and, perhaps, to his previous administrative experience. At one point he admitted that:

"I've had lots of experience in guiding and once had my own company, this made me confident that I could do it well. However, as things turned out, we had struggled so hard and, again, I failed for some reason. I gather the main factor that prevented me from succeeding was there was little loyalty among our tour guides, by and large. Especially the good quality guides. We had bookings from travelling companies abroad which requested particular tour guides specifically because of their quality tour guiding and commentary. After the tourists arrived, the requested tour guides didn't show up and we had to substitute them with any guide available. Some good tour guides go wherever the grass is greener; it's just unfortunate for us that later we couldn't secure any more contracts from some travel agents abroad".

So, it was not surprising that he and his friend later decided to put an end to their travel company. He (ibid.) simply put:

"I am now being a tour guide again and rather happy about it; now I have my own freedom to work as a freelancer and no more stress and pressure!".

To conclude, having been an excellent tour guide with years of tour guiding experience does not always constitute a success in running a tour operating business.

Such experience does not present failure if a tour guide intends to progress further than a tour guiding career. It has to be remembered that, in the tourism business, the market is extremely volatile. Lavery (1989:117) has clearly stated that:

"The demand for the tourism product is entirely discretionary. It is not essential and is influenced by people's tastes, perceptions and preferences and other intangible factors. Besides, the tourism product is often seasonal and it is lost if 'unsold' by a particular date".

### **7.20 Blue Badge Tour Guides' Code of Conduct**

Perhaps this is the most controversial and, at the same time, topical issue under consideration by the parties concerned which include the government tourism authority, the professional tour guide association and the tourism industry operators. All the bodies are worried and concerned about their tour guides' behaviour and conduct: how they market themselves, how they interact with their colleagues and the public and how they conduct themselves in general (Pond, 1993: 223).

In this regard, tour guides are also well aware that while doing a tour, they have to try their best to satisfy customers. Tourists expect their guides to be of assistance, especially when they are accompanied by their tour guides to places where they are not familiar. However, in most cases, it all depends on the individual tour guide's common sense and discretion. However, it has to be said that the level of common sense and discretion varies.

In the UK, Blue Badge tour guides have to observe the tour guide's Code of Conduct agreed upon prior to becoming a member of the Guilds of Guide Lecturers. Therefore, while conducting a tour, a Blue Badge tour guide should follow DOs and DON'Ts stipulated in the Code of Conduct 1997, namely:

- Answer questions with care, honesty and politeness.
- Make sure that equal attention is given to all clients and not only to young, wealthy or attractive persons.

- Avoid making negative judgements about other countries, their beliefs, customs, politics, and refrain from discussing controversial subjects.
- Admit your ignorance rather than give misleading information or lying.
- Avoid discussing your personal problems with clients.
- Avoid accompanying tourists to restricted areas and places of which respectable people disapprove.
- Never ask for gifts or tips.
- Do not allow your conduct with clients to become over familiar.
- Obey the laws, regulations, customs and traditions of your country and encourage clients to do the same.
- Remember that your behaviour contributes to the country's image.
- Be tidy and well dressed.
- Show good manners and avoid nervousness, no matter what unexpected events occur: Don't panic – keep cool, calm and collected.
- Maintain a sense of humour in all situations.

An experienced tour guide trainer (Interview 22 ) points out that:

"From my own experience, I regard tour guides' code of conduct is the main yardstick for all tour guides' professionalism".

It is important to remember also that to carry out their tour guiding efficiently and smoothly, tour guides must be diplomats. By exercising diplomacy and tact, they will certainly make their tour guiding enjoyable and pleasurable.

Apart from the code of conduct which is important and conducive to the unruffled and successful operation in tour guiding, the author believes that, still, there are other key qualities necessary for tour guides, since tour guides are far more than persons who merely inform, introduce, guide, and give advice during visits (Holloway, 1989; Hughes, 1991). Those are:

- Moral quality: honesty, modesty, dignity and trustworthiness.
- Intellectual quality: interest in information and cultural matters.
- Professional quality: ability to communicate.

As previously discussed, for the majority of overseas visitors, their tour guide may be the first person, native to that country, with whom they come into contact closely. Tour guides' performance and conducts can significantly contribute to their tour company's success or failure, in addition to *making or breaking* their tour participants' travelling experience. Thus, it is not surprising that they are regarded as their country's *ambassadors*.

Tour guides (Interview 1 ) in Both the UK and in Thailand had mixed opinions. Some agreed that they are 'unofficial' ambassadors for their country, so they must be scrupulous. Others, however, seemed reluctant because they thought that the term 'ambassador' was exaggerating despite 'unofficial'; rather, they preferred to be 'representatives' of their country, who would represent the country in the best possible way.



During the past five years, all tour guides in Thailand have been convinced by the tourism-related bodies to believe that they are actually *Cultural Ambassadors* of the country, not merely *the representatives* of the country, and the term is pleasantly accepted among tour guides themselves, though it is possible that different tour guides may interpret and understand this term differently.

To put things into perspective, since tour guides have to present their country in the most favourable way, they must have an excellent knowledge of their country and of the psychology of their visitors. The most significant points are:

- To know how to speak well.
- To have a good command of their subjects.
- To be able to adapt the level of their commentary according to the needs and tastes of their group tour.
- To be able to give a varied, balanced commentary linked to what the visitors are seeing.

During an excursion trip, tour guides should also have a lively character, capable of creating gaiety and cheerfulness. Besides, physical appearance is quite important because for tour guides proper dress is essential. It is best for tour guides to dress in a discreet manner, neat, clean and tidy. In general, the dress of tour guides should be appropriate for the tour guiding itinerary while they are guiding. The visitors' first impression of the guide is important in establishing his/her role as leader.

Lillian Brown was quoted by Pond (1993:124) as saying that:

"It is often said that people judge you during the first five seconds of simply looking at you, and again during the first five seconds after you begin to speak. These dual aspects of your person – your appearance and your voice and speaking ability – can make a crucial difference in your career and in your life".

### **7.21 Conclusion**

Travelling in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will undoubtedly be more popular and the travellers will also consist of a more diverse backgrounds in terms of culture, society, economy and politics. Despite their having different objectives in travelling, tourists are arguably expecting to broaden their knowledge and experience, apart from being relaxed and entertained. People, in fact, had been travelling since their existence; though their original purpose in travelling those days were completely different from today's modern tourists': for survival rather than for pleasure (Pond, 1993:1). However, tour guiding nowadays is generally recognised as a career being corresponded with visitors' needs and requirements. It is a demanding career which requires competency in guiding language and skills, general and specific knowledge, patience, leadership as well as personality.

Tour guiding is highly regarded as a career of ambassador's or country's representative's. To what extent it is valid still opens to further discussion. To some tour guides, they take pride in their job and responsibility as important as the country's ambassador; to others, they reckon that they are actually being over-estimated and it is exaggerating. It is still doubtful as to whether the majority of tour guides are content with their role being labelled as "Cultural Ambassador" of their country: the title that echoes the beauty, uniqueness and subtlety of their culture which only the good representative of the country is capable of delivering.

As far as tour guides' impression is concerned, their visitors are overwhelmingly impressed with Thailand's cultural presentation through which tour guide's mediation. Especially cultural/historical attractions visited, such as The Temple of the Emerald

Buddha; the Lanna Cultural Centre in Chiangmai, the World Cultural Heritage sites at Ayuddhaya have always attracted those foreign visitors' interests.

If tour guiding is recognised as such, then tour guides must be well paid and this guiding job must be attractive to job seekers and high calibre people. Therefore, it is appropriate to say that a professional tour guide needs to attain and sustain the code of conduct and key qualities mentioned above. Tour guiding is certainly one of the demanding careers in the tourism industry which requires service mind, well self-disciplined and positive attitudes towards visiting tourists and especially tour guide's own country.

## Chapter 8

### Preliminary Findings

#### Key Players: Organisational Support

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**This chapter explores roles and significance of related organisations, regarded as key players, in terms of their involvement and support given to tour guide training in the U.K and Thailand. Despite the fact that guide training organisers in both countries are able to manage on their own, assistance and encouragement by those institutions have proved significant and crucial for the smoothness and success for the whole guide training operation.**

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#### 8.1 Introduction

It is undeniable that the success of guide training is largely based on the support of the organisations concerned, i.e., the national tourist organisation, the tour operators, the professional guide association and the guide training's organising committee. Their contribution crucially affects the formation, content and achievement of the guide training curriculum and the quality of tour guides (Interview 1). However, the degree of participation and extent of support from these bodies towards guide training varies from area to area, region to region, and especially from country to country.

Though the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has now opened several "Duty Free" shops in Bangkok in order to increase tourism revenue from tourist shopping and to alleviate the *taking commission* practice, its attempt does not seem fruitful since the goods of those shops are still quite expensive and do not attract as many tourists as

expected. However, the mass tourists with short stays, not having enough time to shop at those shops, still have to buy gifts or souvenirs at the shops recommended by their tour guides. One guide (Interview 2) said that:

"The tour operating company for which I work has a list of trustworthy shops that offer good prices and good quality. We ensure our tourists that they will get only genuine goods because any kind of complaints would certainly damage the company's reputation. If there are any problems, we will be responsible in helping them out in one way or another".

It is interesting to note that the practice of "expecting and getting commission" is deemed as unethical and unprofessional among Blue Badge guides (Holloway, 1989). They also disapprove of the solicitation of *tips* from tourists unless it is given as a gesture of appreciation. Even though the *commission* issue is not acceptable among the UK Blue Badge guides, they are aware that the opportunity of securing a commission is not unusual if tourists want to visit sites like a woollen mill as a Blue Badge guide (Interview 3) pointed out that:

"It has been a long tradition for the woollen mills to give a tourist guide 1-5% commission as an incentive, apart from serving free snacks or coffee. Though the majority of Blue Badge guides deem that this practice is unprofessional and unethical, some feel that taking this commission is not actually a bad thing as it will help supplement their income".

The researcher maintains that if taking a commission practice is *incentive oriented*, then there is nothing wrong for guides to obtain the commission. The commission would be not only "inappropriate" but also "unethical" if those shops had "marked-up" the price to give the tourist guides that portion in order to retain their full profit.

## **8.2 Thailand's Guide Training: Organisational Support**

### ***a) The Tourism Authority of Thailand:***

In Thailand, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has initiated guide training by requesting public and private universities to participate in organising guide training courses because of its insufficient finance and personnel (Interview 4). The number of

the guide training organisers throughout the country in 1998 was 35 and seems to be on the rise. The TAT acts as a co-ordinator between guide training organisers and prospective guide applicants, and also as a registering body, which registers guides and issues guiding licences.

Upon completing their training courses, guide trainees must apply to the TAT for registration to obtain a guide 'ID card'. Until the release of the national guide training syllabus guideline, the TAT merely went over the proposed guide training course submitted by various guide training organisers and gave a recommendation, where appropriate. In most cases, the TAT would not prevent any educational institutions from offering guide training courses because it needs their co-operation in producing and streamlining tour guides and controlling their quality. Since the TAT does not have a representative in the screening committee of any of those institutions, or examine those guide trainees itself, it is no doubt that one can always question the quality of those guide training institutions and their own guide students.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) plays a crucial role in assisting guide-training organisers in different parts of Thailand. One item of key supports is, when requested, to send one of its staff to be a guest speaker or guide lecturer. It also acts as liaison between guide training establishments, individuals, and organisations concerned in order to arrange speakers as and when required (Interview 5).

However, after the guide-training course was extended to other regions of Thailand, some provincial guide training establishments experienced financial troubles. These regional guide-training organisers had to set guide training fees as low as possible in order to attract more applicants, owing to the fact that most prospective guide applicants could not afford the guide training fees due to their poverty. Thus, the support given by the TAT was largely financial in nature.

As the issue of insufficiency of tour guides prevailed, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) deemed it necessary to encourage more public and private universities from all over the country to organise guide training courses to cope with the growth in tourism. This was accomplished by allocating a special budget to assist those troubled guide training organisers. Some training establishments (particularly

regional ones) received on occasion approximately 100,000 Baht or £1,666 (£1= Baht 60) per year, in addition to materials and personnel assistance, to ensure the smooth operation of their guide training programme (Interview 6).

It is fair to say that the priority in allocation of aid from the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is determined by the location of guide training establishment. If they are located in a province or region where significant and popular visitor attractions exist, then the amount of financial assistance and priority will be highly prioritised. In other areas where there are fewer popular visitor attractions, it seems that guide-training establishments have to rely more on their own resources. By contrast, it is less problematic for guide training establishments in Bangkok and cities in popular tourist regions, e.g., the North, the South. They tend to be more economically viable in running their guide training course than those in less developed tourist regions such as the north-eastern provinces.

In conclusion, this summaries how significant financial aid from the TAT is distributed to provincial guide training organisers, to assist them to carry out their training programmes.

**Table 8: The Number of Registered Guides in Thailand, 1998**  
(Licence-Based)

<b>License Type</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Bangkok</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>Northeast</b>
<b>General Guide</b> <i>(Foreign Language)</i>	8,142	5,642	1,315	1,055	193
<b>General Guide</b> <i>(Thai Language)</i>	1,368	907	223	170	68
<b>Grand Total</b>	9,510	6,531	1,538	1,225	261

(Source: Registrar of Tourism Authority of Thailand: 1998)

The above figures of registered tour guides using foreign languages illustrate that there are more tour guides in Bangkok metropolitan area than in the provinces, particularly those in the north-east provinces. This is attributable to the fact that there are more guiding jobs in Bangkok than in the provinces. Also, the provinces in the Northeast, despite having various visitor attractions (natural and cultural) to entice foreign tourists, have not yet proven popular enough to attract more visitors. This is largely due to the fact that they still lack development of "sites of interest" and have inadequate infrastructure and facilities.

This has raised the question of the ratio of tour guides to each area of Thailand. The number of tour guides should be in proportion to each area's level of interest to tourists. Thus, it is not surprising that one of the issues being raised in a seminar among provincial governors of Thailand (Interview 7) was that there was an urgent need to increase the number of local tour guides in several provinces of interest to tourists. Local people should be encouraged and motivated to be trained as tour guides for guiding in their own areas because the natives must know their own places better than guides from Bangkok or other regions who tend to guide foreign visitors in a 'talking book' manner.

Since the competition is very strong among Thai tour guides, the increasing number of overseas tour managers/tour leaders has caused grave concern for the currently practising tour guides and concerned parties, despite the proclamation of the Tourism Business and Guide Act in 1994. Co-operation between certain joint-venture tour operating companies in Thailand and foreign tour operators results in "illegal" guiding from these "disguised" tour guides (Interview 8).

This growing anxiety has prompted concerned organisations, especially the Tourism Authority of Thailand, with the co-operation of the Professional Guide Association of Thailand (PGAT) and practising tour guides, to map out measures to tackle the issue by initiating the Tourism Business and Guide Act in 1994. According to this Act, illegal tour guides or registered ones who are guiding without wearing their ID card will be fined up to 5,000 Baht or approximately £83 (Interview 9). However, foreign tour managers/tour leaders accompanied by tour group are allowed to work as interpreters/translators *only* when a local tour guide is present.



### ***b) Tour Operators:***

In Thailand, no tour operators/travel agents have been involved in the process of selecting guide applicants since all guide training organisers have not invited any of their representatives to be part of the guide selection committees. However, some of them have played important roles in giving tourism students an opportunity to have on-the-job training experience regarding administrative work and guiding observation. Unfortunately, there is an indication that this supportive aspect will be discontinued, since tour operators are wary that those inexperienced students could have acted outside the normal guidelines used by the company, as in the following case (Interview 10):

A tourism student, who was allowed to follow the company's tour guide giving a commentary on a coach, was asked by tourists on the coach about shopping and eating places and they were told of the places regarded as good value for money. Later, after the tour coach stopped at its company's 'regular' shops and restaurants, those tourists refused to get off the coach and, instead, asked the coach driver to take them to the shops and restaurants recommended earlier by the student. The coach driver refused to comply and some tourists got off the coach without going to the "shops" with which the tour company had an agreement.

This type of incident inevitably discourages tour operators from giving such support. To a certain extent, some tour operators obtain commission from their "regular" shops and restaurants by taking tourists to "drop" there. The amount of "commission" received from these shops is in the region of 10-25% of the overall tourists spend (see also ch.7). It acts as a subsidy, allowing the tour operators to sell much cheaper tours to their customers, hence charge their tour participants less. In light of this scenario, very few tour operators are willing to take chances in allowing tourism students to have on-the-job training for fear of losing their business reputation and additional income.

### ***c) Tour Guide Training Organisers:***

In Thailand, the tour guide training organisers are generally public and private educational institutions which work in conjunction with the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) in organising guide training courses. The training programme is also

regarded as part of the university's extra curriculum activity aiming to serve the public (Interview 11).

It should be noted that several universities in Thailand, such as Silpakorn University, Kasetsart University, Durakijpundit University also have a four-year tourism course (BA) whose students automatically receive a guiding licence from the TAT upon their completion. In addition the above mentioned universities have organised a tour guide training course once a year (very few offer twice a year) for interested members of the public which takes approximately 12-16 weeks.

The guide training's organising committee usually consists of lecturers who are generally on the university's staff. They are, as an ad hoc committee, assigned to organise and manage guide training courses on behalf of the university which provides the required financial support and necessary facilities, i.e., classroom, slide projector, university bus, etc. The Director of Studies of guide training will act as a 'bridge' between the guide lecturers and guide trainees. Before running a guide-training course, the organising committee is required to submit the proposed guide-training course for approval from the TAT (Interview 12).

***d) The Professional Guide Association of Thailand (PGAT):***

Established in 1975, the Professional Guide Association of Thailand has played a significant role in supporting guide training. Though not having organised the tour guide training courses itself, the association has, in fact, co-operated with other parties concerned, such as tour operators, the Tourism Authority of Thailand, the public and private universities, in giving suggestions and providing guide lecturers as requested. Most importantly, it took part in establishing the objectives and course contents of the national guide-training syllabus in 1994.

The main objective of the PGAT is to raise the quality and standard of tour guides. It also maintains and protects the rights and benefits of its members. For example, if its guide members are unfairly treated by their employers, or complained about by their tourists, the PGAT will investigate and clarify the matter. It has also set a guideline for guiding fees as well as securing guiding jobs for its members.

In principle, the PGAT is committed to raising the standard and quality of the practising guides and issuing a 'recommended' going rate, as well as providing moral support for its members. In brief, the PGAT is a moral supporter for "decent" guides and a formidable inspector should guides misbehave.

The author strongly believes that the PGAT could have contributed significantly to the quality and standard of tour guides if it had organised guide-training courses itself. Undoubtedly, the PGAT is supposed to be the only body concerned that can produce 'qualified' tour guides. Given the fact that its staff consists of a large number of experienced tour guides, there is no question about its capability to manage the guide training courses and produce tour guides in a professional manner.

But why has the PGAT not organised guide training courses? There are two possible reasons:

- The PGAT's original objectives were not concerned with the provision of tour guide training.
- The PGAT does not want to have "conflicts of interest" in terms of being a competitor with the current tour guide training organisers, namely educational institutions, nation-wide.

One of the constraints which has, presumably, prevented the PGAT from deciding to organise the training course itself, is that some of its management staff have been directly or indirectly involved in tourism-related businesses, i.e., tour operating, souvenir shops, restaurants, etc. Clearly, this will unavoidably affect the credibility of the organising committee and the practicality of the guide training courses organised. Besides, questions will certainly be raised from other parties concerned regarding the qualifications of the organising committee as well as the fairness of the guide training management.

Until the above factors are addressed, the production of 'efficient' guides in Thailand seems difficult to materialise.

If one of the PGAT 's main objectives is to "raise and maintain the standard and quality of tour guides", then the questions raised are: How can the standard of guides be raised? Is the quality of the currently practising guides acceptable and, more importantly, how can this objective be implemented to avoid the need for new guides to be re-trained by their employers?

Most importantly, is it possible to raise the guiding standard, given the constraints and obstacles already discussed? Unless the discrepancies are addressed by the parties concerned in a serious manner, the chances of raising the quality and standard of Thai tour guides are, indeed, very slim.

### **8.3 The UK's Guide Training Organisational Support**

#### ***a) National Tourist Board and Tour Guide Training Organisers:***

Given various types of tour guides and training in the UK (such as Guide Friday, Stately Home guides, etc.), the Blue Badge guide training is the most highly recognised (see chapter 5 & 6). In the UK, the National Tourist Boards' supportive involvement in guide training, apart from being a guide registering body, is to have a representative taking part in the selection, examination and evaluation (Interview 13). But in England and Wales (unfortunately no Blue Badge guide training in the Northern Ireland), the Tourist Boards not only maintain the register of qualified guides, but also own and present the Blue Badges. They are authorised to take the badges back if something happens, i.e., guides who have misbehaved. Though they do not put money into the guide training or subsidise it, they keep the guide register and have their representative in the interviewing panel to select the guide applicants (Interview 14).

However, in Scotland, the support and involvement from the Scottish Tourist Board (STB) is rather different from other parts of the UK in that the STB is not a registering body. The STB only approves the guides but does not register them. The registering body in Scotland is the Scottish Professional Guide Association (SPGA). Nevertheless, the STB has financially subsidised tour guide training in Scotland by making a small grant of money towards the costs of running the Scottish guide training course (Interview 15).

Prior to 1990, the National Tourist Board were responsible for organising the guide training courses by selecting a suitable candidate to be the course's Director of Studies. The support given by the Tourist Board was mainly in the form of finance and infrastructure, i.e., lecture rooms, training facilities and equipment. Yet, the sponsoring Tourist Board staff had to cope with secretarial work such as producing photocopies, timetables, correspondence, paying salary, etc.. Obviously, there was considerable administrative work involved if there were thirty to forty guide trainees. The assistance from the National Tourist Board towards guide training was considerably reduced, especially in 1990, during which time the London Tourist Board (LTB) appointed and paid directly, for the Director of Studies of the guide training courses in London. Later it was decided that it would be better for the National Tourist Board to lose all of its administrative work in order to minimise costs, which means that the National Tourist Board could cut back on bureaucracy, reducing budget and its office space.

Therefore The LTB advertised for a Director of Studies to take full responsibility for all of the administration and teaching of guide training (Interview 16).

In addition, there was a strong competition to get 'the job' from interested people around the UK who had to submit their résumé to be selected as Director of Studies, which would be a non-salaried, self-employed post. In addition, the guide training course will be run in a business-like manner, rather than being part of the services of a tourist organisation.

The person selected would be in charge of hiring lecture rooms, coaches, collecting the fees, paying guide tutors, etc. The Director of Studies would have to set the fees for the course and make a profit to cover all the expenses. He or she would be organising a Blue Badge guide training on behalf of and in conjunction with the LTB.

In order to enhance guide training administration, a guide training centre called 'Elizabethan Buro' was established. All related guide-training matters would be administered here under the management of the Director of Studies and staff. Without any financial input from the LTB, the Director of Studies and staff have to

run guide training in a business-like style in order to make enough money to financially support the training centre and themselves.

In fact, the Blue Badge guide training organiser is nominally supported by the LTB in a manner described by the Director of Studies (Interview 17) that, "We have the permission to use the letterhead of the London Tourist Board and work under its blessing..."

The Blue Badge guide training staff is a team of experienced Blue Badge guide trainers/lecturers, who are committed to raising the standard and quality of guiding performance. After being selected by the London Tourist Board (LTB), the present Director of Studies of Blue Badge guide training, a highly experienced Blue Badge guide herself, would select her team consisting of all experienced Blue Badge guides to run the guide training course. Though fully responsible for all the training process, the Director of Studies has to keep the LTB informed of the guide training progress and its constraints.

In so doing, the Director of Studies is financially independent and is no longer subsidised by the LTB. An experienced guide tutor (Interview 18) has pointed that,

"The idea of hiring a 'professional' guide to run the guide training is presumably connected to 'the spirit of privatisation' of Margaret Thatcher's administration".

In conclusion, the Tourist Boards have always played a supportive role in maintaining and improving the quality of guides and standard of guide training through their representation in the selection process, particularly the interview and written examination stages. A guide trainer (Interview 19) has said that,

"The main reason for the tourist board wanting to be involved in guide training is that they want quality out of the guide training and to make sure that there is good quality control from their viewpoint".

***b) Tour Operators and the Guilds of Guide Lecturers (GGL):***

It is worth noting that the related private sectors such as tour operators and the Guilds of Guide Lecturers (GGL) have played a very constructive role in supporting the Blue Badge guide training. That is, before the selection process for guide trainees starts, tour operators are generally requested by the London Blue Badge guide training committee to send a representative to be part of the interviewing panel. This is regarded as the first crucial step in enabling the organising committee to get suitable guide candidates from the prospective employers' point of view (Interview 20).

The tour operators' supportive participation also includes the provision of advice and suggestions. They keep the Blue Badge guide organising committee informed of what is specifically required of the guides and guide training syllabus, i.e., whether a guide with particular language skills is required or what particular visitor attractions should be emphasised.

This helpful advice assists the Director of Studies to modify and adjust the course syllabus accordingly (Interview 21). In the examination evaluation, the tour operator also sends a representative to join in appraising the guide trainees' practical task. They are requested by the guide training committee to express their viewpoint regarding the guides they want to hire. This is very useful to the organising committee in order to have a good idea of the type of guide applicants they are trying to select.

Established in 1950, the Guilds of Guide Lecturers (GGL) is the Professional Association for the Tourist Board Registered Guides in the British Isles (Interview 22). The GGL is a national body with members covering more than 38 languages living throughout Great Britain. One of its key objectives is to ensure the highest standard of quality and professionalism of its Blue Badge guides.

In order to update the practising guides' knowledge, the Guilds of Guide Lecturers has organised an 'On-going Professional Training' programme (OTP) through the annual winter programme. For instance, the 1998's OTP programme has included 'Dockhands' which has been a popular visitor attraction for overseas visitors.

The GGL is also a place where guide employers, i.e., tour operators, request guiding services. Thus, its members are in a better position to get a guiding job all year round through the Guilds.

Apart from distributing the *Guilds List* which is the annual directory of members to major tour operators, tourist boards, conference organisers, etc., the GGL has also published a recommended 'going rate' for Blue Badge guides to ensure that its members are not undercutting one another. It also keeps the performance records of its members to guarantee that guides' employers will get high quality service from its members. Therefore, guides who have a good record of their guiding performance will certainly get frequent requests for their services.

One of the marketing tools which has been effectively employed by the Guilds of Guide Lecturers is a social event called "Meet the Prospective Employers" (Interview 1). This is scheduled to coincide with the new guides' successful completion of the guide training course. This occasion basically allows the newly graduated guides to have an opportunity to *introduce* themselves directly to their future employers, who are tour operators, coach companies, stately-home owners, museum directors, etc.

On this day, apart from having the opportunity to have a face-to-face meeting with their prospective employers, new tour guides will give a demonstration commentary on planned routes and sites. This kind of public relations strategy clearly has a significant impact on both the new guides and their prospective employers.

It is fair to say that many new guides find employment immediately after the demonstration commentary is finished. The prospective employers are also kept abreast of the quality of the new guides whose services may be needed in the future.

For all Blue Badge guide trainees, this event is apparently a good morale booster. So, they have to keep active and improve themselves during their guide-training course all the time (Interview 2). Most importantly, with the prospect of getting the guiding job outright after graduation, they are willing to work hard and put in more effort. Therefore, it is not surprising that every year after the event, several new guides are booked immediately, and many are left with addresses for contact at a later date.



#### 8.4 Conclusion

There is no question about what guide training can contribute to the standard and quality of tour guides. The individuals and organisations concerned all have significant roles to play in supporting and enhancing the guide training system and curriculum. As a “front door” to prospective guide trainees, therefore, tour guide training establishments' roles and support are arguably of paramount importance and emphasis in selecting the right candidates must be placed upon:

- A “balanced” guide selection panel, consisting of a representative from related organisations such as tourist organisation, guide association, tour operators.
- Right attitude of guide applicants who genuinely want to pursue a guiding career.
- Suitable personality and mentality of guide applicants.

Despite having obtained the “right” guide candidates, it is also crucial for guide training organisers to be aware of the following key areas, such as:

- A practical training period which ensures sufficient “practice” guiding and knowledge for guiding.
- Guide trainers/lecturers must be carefully selected. Experienced tour guides are the most suitable people in assuming guide trainers/lecturers' roles.
- Refresher courses must be initiated in order to ensure sustainable quality and efficiency of practising tour guides.

Aside from which, the ratio of guide trainees to guide trainers/lecturers must be correctly balanced. However, it could be argued that, especially in Thailand, low guide training fees would justify a big class size, and that there is a shortage of guide

trainers/lecturer. True, a large class enables guide training establishments to charge lower training fees and, at the same time, attract more applicants. This is perfectly understandable, from the guide training organisers' perspective, since economic viability in the operational costs must be their priority. The important question is: To what extent can guide training quality be compromised?

It is also true that most guide training establishments use *only* academicians as their guide trainers/lecturers; thus it seems that there is insufficient number of guide trainers/lecturers. However, given the number of tour guides using foreign languages available (Table 10), it is appropriate to say that there is potentially a large number of tour guides, who could be hired to be guide trainers/lecturers.

The fact that the tour guide training in Thailand has been operated by academicians, with or without professional guiding experience, has inevitably affected the quality and standard of newly completed tour guides. One of the classic results of this is that new tour guides have to be re-trained by their employers for approximately three to twenty-four months before being allowed to guide independently. Tour operators/travel agents' hesitation in paying a "reasonable" guiding fee to their tour guides is, in fact, understandable.

Unless an initiative is taken immediately by either the Tourism Authority of Thailand or the Professional Guide Association of Thailand to rectify guide training in Thailand, the high standard and quality of Thai tour guides is unlikely to be improved in the foreseeable future.

By comparison, UK Blue Badge guide training has a rigorous guide training system which covers:

- Proper selection of guide applicants.
- A balanced interview panel from relevant and concerned parties.
- A proportionate ratio between guide trainees and guide trainers/lecturers.

- A strenuous guide training course with a particular emphasis on 'practical' tasks.
- A strict guide training examination to ensure a high standard.

Most significantly, Blue Badge guide training has been organised by a team of experienced tour guides whose purpose is to sustain and enhance the high quality and professionalism of tour guides. Therefore, it is not surprising that Blue Badge guide training is so highly recognised, and that its newly completed Blue Badge guide trainees are entrusted to work immediately on their first working day without being re-trained by their employers.

As far as raising the quality of tour guides and the standard of guide training in Thailand is concerned, there are arguable crucial elements to be taken into account for guide training organisers, such as:

- Guiding techniques and communications skills are fundamentally important aspects of guiding since they contribute significantly to the enhancement of visitor experience and the success of the tour.
- A proper and sensible emphasis is needed should guide training organisers want to raise the quality of tour guides.

Undeniably, the last thing tour operators want to do is to re-train their tour guides, unless they have reasons to do so. Therefore, tour guides need to have considerable "hands-on" experience by practising how to guide.

In Thailand, guide trainees are required to take fieldtrips both in and outside Bangkok in order to increase their guiding experience. However, the author strongly argues that the tour guide training organisers' concept of having guide trainees go on fieldtrips is, to say the least, impractical. During their fieldtrips, they do not have to practise on how to guide or give a commentary, either on the coach or at sites. What guide

trainees do need is considerable guiding practice and feedback from their “real and experienced” guide trainers so that they can improve their commentary.

Certain constructive aspects of Blue Badge guide training courses, especially the *practical task* would be helpful and useful for Thai guide training organisers to consider seriously. A *practical task* is different from *field trip*, because the former focuses on the practice of giving a commentary (on a coach, on foot or at sites) over and over again under the close supervision of an experienced guide trainer, whereas the latter (field trip) focuses on the establishment of personal connections among guide trainees, in addition to encouraging guide trainees to experience the actual sites and observe how a commentary is given by their guide lecturer/trainer to whom they could put questions.

The quality of guide trainees has, first and foremost, to do with suitable numbers. It is virtually impossible for any guide training establishments to generate effective guides without taking into consideration the suitable ratio between guide trainees and guide lecturers/trainers. In a situation where experienced guide trainers are insufficient, to have 120-150 guide trainees for each course is not a practical approach.

However, the author firmly believes that there is no point in producing tour guides whose quality is hardly recognised by tour operators. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has to re-appraise its approach in terms of quality control, both theoretically and practically, by sending its representative to be one of the organising committee and taking part in the selection, examination and appraising process.

Guide-training establishments in Thailand have organised tour guide training courses in conjunction with TAT by submitting the proposed guide training course syllabus and related details to TAT. However, in the course of the training programme, there is hardly any quality control from the TAT. Consequently, the quality of the end product is questionable. To date, tour guide training tends to be more commercialised, given the fact that there is a significant increase in the number of guide training establishments every year. Without a proper monitoring mechanism from concerned

parties, how the quality of tour guides and standard of guide training could be raised and established still remains to be seen.

Furthermore, the degree of organisational involvement is very significant in achieving success in guide training. It is not necessary for the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), as one of the government agencies, to organise guide training itself as Jenkins (1994) has put it that, "government should not do what the private sector is able and willing to do". In the case of tour guide training in Thailand, TAT may not be able to play a major role due to insufficient resources, i.e., finance and personnel. The Professional Guide Association of Thailand (PGAT), which is a private sector organisation, is clearly an able and qualified body to organise a guide training course.

However, suitable approaches must be employed carefully. Effective co-operation among the parties concerned, such as tour operators and the Professional Guide Association of Thailand (PGAT) must be initiated by the national and regional tourist organisations in producing qualified tour guides to serve the tourism industry. Given the fact that the quality of tour guides has hardly been recognised, and constraints encountered by the TAT, it is time the Professional Guide Association of Thailand (PGAT) stepped fully in to be a key player in organising guide training itself, as it is the most suitable contender, well equipped with expertise and experienced guides who can well assume the role of guide trainers. The author is convinced that as a consequence, the future of better guide training in Thailand will materialise.

As far as developing a guide-training curriculum is concerned, it is important to get major elements into perspective. Since guides have to encounter tourists from various countries and different backgrounds, they should be well informed of cross-cultural aspects and some tourist psychology so that those more demanding tourists can be effectively dealt with. The necessary subjects must encapsulate what the guides should learn in order to satisfy the tourists and enable them to guide in as wide an area as possible. In order to make this happen, the following considerations need to be taken into account:

- *Content analysis:* this is an important first step in determining what the curriculum should be for guide trainees who will meet with

tourists whose expectations vary. The guide trainees also come from different cultural, social, economic and educational backgrounds which will, to a certain extent, affect their learning ability.

- *Objectives required:* it is true that clear and comprehensive objectives provide an important foundation for the curriculum. Mostly, the objectives determine what content is important and how it should be organised. For instance, if voice production is considered a vital part of the guide's presentation, then speaking techniques must be included.
- *Content selection:* this involves criteria such as its validity and significance, the distinction between the levels of content, and decisions about the level of development at which to introduce it.
- *Appraisal process:* it is important to have a systematic way of evaluating the guides' performance. The important question to be addressed is: How can the quality of guides and standard of guide training be evaluated?

To summarise, a good guide-training curriculum is indisputably the solid platform in producing 'quality' guides apart from having qualified guide trainers/lecturers. Guiding techniques and communication skills 'must' be included and 'seriously' put into practice under the close supervision of experienced guides. Guiding knowledge is one thing, efficiency in transmitting knowledge is another. No matter how knowledgeable tour guides are, if they cannot get the messages across, guiding knowledge is useless.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Main Findings Analysis**

#### **Comparison of Tour Guide Training Curriculum**

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**This chapter presents analysis of the main findings resulting from the interviews made in both the U.K. and Thailand. Keys areas including various aspects of guide training in both countries are illustrated in the form of content analysis. It also attempts to investigate the tour guide training curriculum administered in the guide training institutions selected in the UK and Thailand. This analysis of the main findings includes subjects taught in three major areas i.e. national topics, local topics and guiding techniques. The tour guide training examination including guide examination fees and the presentation of knowledge is illustrated. Besides, a comparison in relation to guide training courses between the UK and Thailand is discussed.**

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##### **9.1 Introduction:**

This section analyses the main findings research by looking into key features of the training curriculum adopted in the UK and Thailand. In order to get an overall picture of these two different curriculum, each country's tour guide training curriculum structure is systemically broken down into main categories: class size, training length, fees, interview panel, pre-entrant examination, chosen criteria, guiding practice,

assessment criteria (final examination) and curriculum focus before a comparison will be made (see Table 9):

**Table 9 Tour Guide Training Curriculum in Comparison**

<b>Curriculum</b> <b>Country</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>Thailand</b>
<b>Class Size</b>	35	75-150
<b>Training Length (Year)</b>	2	1/4
<b>Fees ( £ )</b>	1,000	250
<b>Interview Panel</b>	Consist of various representatives	Not consist of various representatives
<b>Pre-entrance Exam</b>	Interview & Written Exam	Interview & Written Exam
<b>Chosen Criteria</b>	Personality & Motivation, Right Attitude	Linguistic & Personality
<b>Guiding Practice</b>	Every Saturday & Sunday	None
<b>Assessment Criteria</b>	Written & Guiding Commentary Examination	Written & Short Slides /Guiding Commentary
<b>Curriculum Focus (%)</b>	50/50 of Guiding Knowledge/Guiding Skills	95/5 of Guiding Knowledge/Guiding Skills
<b>Passing Marks ( % )</b>	70	60



According to the Oxford English Reference Dictionary (1995:349), a curriculum means "...any program of activities". Despite the term *curriculum* is widely used in various fields, particularly in academic institutions and interpreted differently, the researcher has adopted the above quoted meaning since it fits the whole context of a guide training appropriately, in the sense that a guide training is a program of activities organized by various establishments in the UK and Thailand. Besides, it is specifically designed to be prescribed for study and training.

## **9.2 Guide Training Curriculum in Thailand:**

This section sought to analyze a guide training curriculum in Thailand in terms of its key components, i.e. subjects taught covering academic-related topics, career-related topics, visitor attraction-related topics, fieldtrips and language for guiding. Details of its structure (Table 10) is then explored and discussed below:

**Table 10: Guide Training Curriculum in Thailand**

Academic Related Subj. ( 50 Hours)	Career Related Subj. ( 20 Hours )	Site Related Subjects ( 20 Hours )	Field Trip/ <i>Objective</i> ( 30 Hours)
1. Thai Festival	1. Code of Conduct	1. Thailand's Historical Ruins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Short trip&lt;200 Km.</li><li>• Long trip&gt;200 Km.</li></ul> <p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Build connections</li><li>• Visit actual sites</li><li>• See commentary model</li><li>• Socialising</li></ul>
2. Thai Cuisine	2. Guide Working Process	2. The Grand Palace & the Temple of the Emerald Buddha	
3. Tourism Industry	3. Customs Formalities	3. Local Visitor Attractions	
4. Thai History	4. Hospitality Overview	4. Thailand's Major Visitor Attractions	
5. Thai Geography	5. Tourist Safety & Security	-	
6. Thai Society	6. Human Relationships	-	<p><b>Guiding Language ( 30 Hours )</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improve language for guiding</li><li>• Laying guiding language foundation</li><li>• Enhance language fluency</li></ul>
7. Thailand Buddhism	<p><b>Local/Regional Knowledge</b></p> <p><i>(Subject to Local/Regional concerned)</i></p>		
8. Thai Fine Arts			
9. Thai Literature			
10. Thai Music & Arts			
11. Thai Handicrafts			
12. Tourism Resource Conservation			

### 9.2.1 Structure:

A tour guide training curriculum in Thailand is primarily based on a standard guide-training syllabus initiated by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT). Guide training organisers' curricula must meet minimum requirements in relation to subject areas and teaching hours. Before commencing a training programme, the organisers of tour guide training course have to submit their training curriculum, which covers certain key elements such as a 'core' or national, local/regional knowledge, field trips and language (in guiding) to the TAT for approval (Interview 1 ). Worth noting is that the TAT's standard syllabus is the first standard guide training syllabus ever of its kind, which aims to raise the quality of the current tour guide training and standardise guide training curriculum in Thailand (Guide training guideline, 1994). According to the criteria of this syllabus, a tour guide training curriculum must encompass national topics and teaching hours, such as:

- a) *Academic-related subjects* (50 hours minimum)
- b) *Career-related subjects* (20 hours minimum)
- c) *Visitor attraction-related subjects* (20 hours minimum)
- d) *Field trips* (30 hours minimum)
- e) *Language for guiding* (30 hours minimum)

The standardised guide training course designed by the TAT is illustrated in details below:

**a) Academic-related subjects** which include the following subjects:

1. *Thai Festivals*, includes festivities, seasonal festivals, traditional sports and games such as "sword-club fighting arts" ( Kra-bi, Kra-bong), Thai boxing, kite flying and cock fight.

2. *Thai Cuisine*, which includes various Thai dishes belonging to all parts of Thailand (North, Northeast, South, Central); the arts of cooking which stress food hygiene as well as its texture, shape, colour, decoration; choice of plates/containers, side dishes and main courses.
3. *Tourism Industry*, which includes the meaning and significance of tourism within the economy, society, politics, apart from the elements contributing to tourism's expansion; various types of tourism resources; the benefits acquired by local communities through tourism; the government's policies regarding the promotion of tourism.
4. *Thai History*, which includes the origin of the Thai people; the monarchy establishments of the Thai Kingdoms in different periods; the evolution of politics, government, economy and the major incidents in terms of historically comparative studies.
5. *Thai Geography*, which includes Thailand's territory, geographical classification, different seasons, topographical statistics, governmental administration, economy-related geography and tourism-related geographical elements.
6. *Thai Society*, which includes the society's general characteristics, the society's structure, the Thai society's institutions, the values, beliefs and traditions in Thai society, as well as religions in Thailand.
7. *Buddhism in Thailand*, which includes the adoption of Buddhism in Thailand, the important principles of Buddhism, Buddhism's influence on the values and tradition of Thai people, the Thai monks' education and administration.
8. *Thai Fine Arts*, which includes the fine arts in different periods; the monastery-related architecture; the architecture's influence on the

Royal Palaces and traditional Thai houses; the sculpture of the Buddha statues of different periods.

9. *Thai Literature*, which includes the influences of literature on Thai people's way of life, arts and tradition, such literature as the "Tri-Phoom Pra Ruang", "Ramayana" episodes, Thai legends and folklore.
10. *Thai Classical Music and Performing Arts*, which include Thai classical music and instruments, plays, puppet shows and Thai opera (Li-Kae).
11. *Thai Handicraft*, which includes the unique handicrafts pertaining to four parts of Thailand, the product's original sources, materials used, and quality grading and price range.
12. *Tourism Resources Conservation*, which includes the methods and significance of the tourism resources conservation; the benefits of the natural resources protection; and the promotion of handicraft products and art works.

***b) Career-related subjects*** which cover the following areas:

1. *Tour guide's Code of Conduct*, which includes the significance of tour guides in the tourism industry, the essential aspects of the Tourism Business and Guide Acts B.E.2535 (A.D.1992) in relation to general aspects of tour guides; tour guide's characteristics; roles and responsibilities of tour guides, as well as the manners and etiquette which tour guides are supposed to possess.
2. *Tour Guides Working Process*, which includes job assignment and work preparation before commencing their duties; meeting and seeing the tourists off at the airport; tour excursion organising; guiding techniques at visitor attractions; tourist facilitation; dealing with emergency problems; co-ordination and co-operation with parties and

individuals concerned; getting commission from shops or tourist-related business.

3. *Customs Procedures*, which includes knowledge of visa and passport control; incoming and outgoing passengers; prohibited items and restricted goods when entering/exiting the kingdom; and the maximum currency allowance.
4. *Hospitality Overview*, which includes hotel types and grading systems; room booking and types of rooms; hotel sections, services and facilities; rules and regulations and check-in/check-out process.
5. *Tourists' Safety and Security*, which includes possible dangers tourists may encounter; how to provide tourists safety and security while guiding; practical procedures on accidents or burglary; first aid or necessary equipment application in case of emergency or accident; information about tourist-related organisations.
6. *Human Relationships*, which includes knowledge of public speaking; how to build up good relationship; personality adjustment corresponding to Thai tradition; service techniques and entertainment skills.

**c) Visitor Attraction-related subjects** encompassing the following areas:

1. *Thailand's Historical Ruins*, which include historical parks; backgrounds of the important historical places in different areas.
2. *The Grand Palace and the Temple of the Emerald Buddha*, which include their backgrounds and history; architectural perspectives of various buildings in the Palace and the Temple of the Emerald Buddha; the history of the Emerald Buddha; major Buddha Statues and mural paintings.

3. *Local Visitor attractions*, which include temples, museums, historical sites, monuments, community and an expansion of local community.
4. *Thailand's Major Visitor attractions*, which include important visitor attractions, i.e. ruins, religious sanctuaries, natural visitor attractions, etc. in different parts of Thailand.

#### ***d) Field Trips***

While undertaking a guide-training course, guide trainees are required to take 'field trips' to certain parts of the country. Regarded as a significant part of a guide training curriculum, field trips are essentially 'sites visits', aiming to equip guide trainees with a 'hands-on' experience. The whole period for field trips organised by guide training establishments varies, depending on the frequency, sites and duration. Though a minimum requirement for field trips is 30 hours, by and large fieldtrip period adopted by the majority of guide training curriculum has far exceeded the hours required. One of the guide training organisers interviewed (Interview 2 ) says that the field trips take approximately 140 hours.

Interestingly, the main purposes of "field trips" or "site visits" for Thai guide trainees are different from those of Blue Badge guide trainees' in several aspects, such as:

- Thai trainees are encouraged to get to know one another better through various activities for future connections.
- Thai trainees do not have to practice how to give a commentary, either on coach or at sites.
- Thai trainees will learn how to give a commentary by acting as tourists and by listening to a commentary from a guide lecturer (who is generally not an experienced guide) while on coach and at sites.

Blue Badge guide trainees, however, have to practice how to give a commentary both on coach and at sites, after which they will be given a feedback from their guide trainer/lecturer who is an experienced guide. Despite the fact that their guide

trainer/lecturer will give a commentary demonstration first time for each site visit as a role model, guide trainees are encouraged to develop their own style of guiding and giving a commentary.

Field trips generally encompass visitor attractions in Bangkok and some other provinces. In Bangkok area, field trips will cover certain key visitor attractions, such as the Po Temple (Wat Po), the Royal Grand Palace and the Temple of the Emerald Buddha (Wat Pra Kaew), the Temple of Dawn (Wat Dawn), the Marble Temple, and the National Museum.

Provincial field trips are categorised as short and long field trips. *A short field trip* (less than 200 kms.) usually takes 1-2 days covering visitor attractions within close proximity to Bangkok, such as those in provinces like Petchburi, Lopburi and Ayudhya. A Short overnight stay is sometimes necessary if the distance is a little great, especially when a visit is paid to such provinces as Burirum, Prachinburi, Nakhonratchasima and Bimai. *A long field trip* (greater than 200 kms.) to provinces like Pitsanuloke; Sukhothai would require at least 5 - 7 days since it is a long distance.

For both Bangkok and provincial field trips, guide trainees will have the opportunity to see the actual visitor attractions, and study guiding techniques from their guide lecturers. Besides, they will be able to ask questions on various issues concerning guiding knowledge and related information.

#### **e) *Language for Guiding***

Since most guide trainees are unable to use a foreign language fluently thanks to the lack of opportunity in using it in their daily life, they are required to spend a minimum period of 30 hours on a guiding language. By and large, language hours vary considerably from one guide training establishment to another. In order to provide its guide trainees with excellence in a guiding language, a guide training syllabus of one training establishment (Interview 3) covers approximately 80 hours of guiding language (normally 30 hours). The total guiding language hours are divided into two sessions and two areas: a 50-hour session on tourism aspects, i.e., the popular visitor attractions and locations, and a 30-hour session on foreign cultural study. Its aim is to



reinforce and enhance guide trainees' linguistic ability to effectively deal with tourists from different backgrounds.

It has to be emphasised that a guiding language is, apparently, the only subject that has been taught in the language chosen for guiding, while the remaining subjects are taught in Thai.

### **9.2.2 Thai Guide Training Examination**

In order to pass the guide training course, it is important that guide trainees are to be assessed in both areas: written and oral examinations which are described below:

- a) Written examination covering in-depth knowledge of all subjects taught,
- b) Oral examination including giving a short commentary on selected slides or actual visitor attractions.

In a 3-hour written examination, by and large, guide trainees have to illustrate their knowledge in all subject areas taught by choosing the correct answer, filling the blank with one or two words or giving a short answer. For oral examination, they have to give a short slide presentation and a commentary on sites either in Bangkok or provinces. Some training establishments require their guide trainees to prepare a guide commentary on coach, apart from giving a slide presentation, a commentary on visitor attractions in both Bangkok and provinces (Interview 4). Some even go so far as to require their guide trainees to design a trip organisation, such as the number of tourists, coaches, sites' location, distance, trip stops, accommodation and its facilities, etc.

The passing score is 65-70%, depending on each establishment's own criteria, on both written and oral examinations.

For a commentary session, their performance assessment is based on the basis of accuracy and fluency. Successful guide trainees are those who display good guiding knowledge, self-confidence and guiding language competency in their slide presentation and sites commentary.

### **9.3 Guide Training Curriculum in the U.K.**

Before discussing guide training curriculum in the UK in more details, the researcher has illustrates the curriculum's each key components (Table 11) covering: national topics, guiding techniques and communications; whereas local/regional knowledge is subject to each concerned local/region.

**Table 11: Guide Training Curriculum in the U.K.**

National Topic	Local/Regional Knowledge	Guiding Technique/Communications		
1. Tourism & Its Importance to the British Economy	Subject to each local and regional concerned	<b>General Technique</b>	<b>Knowledge Presentation</b>	
2. British History		1. Audibility	1. Accuracy	
3. British Isles Geography		2. Speech Clarity	2. Selection	
4. British Industry & Commerce		3. Voice Variation	3. Continuity	
5. English Literature		4. Use of Words	4. Interest	
6. Law		5. Group Addressing	-	
7. Architecture		6. Rapport	-	
8. British Countryside & Country Crafts		<b>On Coach</b>	<b>On Foot</b>	-
9. Religion		Microphone	Position	
10. Monarchy & Government		Indication	Facing group	
11. British Wildlife		Timing	Begin after group assembled	
12. The Arts		-	-	
13. Education		-	-	
14. Finance & Taxation		-	-	

### 9.3.1 Structure

Validated by the English Tourist Board (ETB), the 'Approved Syllabus' of London Blue Badge guide training course covers three chief areas, namely:

- a) *National topics*
- b) *Local/regional knowledge.*
- c) *Guiding techniques and communications.*

The standardised guide training course designed by the London Blue Badge guide training is illustrated in details below:

a) *The National topics* can be illustrated as follows:

- *Tourism & Its Importance to the British Economy*, including details of the structure and organisation of the industry and its components, major tourist movements, the historical growth of the industry and its present-day economic role, and a good general location knowledge of the major tourist generating countries and regions of the world.
- *British History*, including key aspects of the main historical periods up to the present-day, especially notable personalities and events.
- *British Isles Geography* including its physical geography, land use, industrial and agricultural regions, chief towns and cities, transport systems, etc. Besides, guide trainees will have to learn Ordnance Survey maps and the elements of map-reading.
- *Britain's Industry & Commerce*, including the historical background of Britain's growth as an industrial and trading nation and its present commercial position in World and European trade and industry, as

well as aspects of the role of Britain as a major banking and insurance centre.

- *English Literature*, including a general knowledge of the major authors and their works in prose and poetry from 1100 to the present day.
- *Law*, including a general knowledge of the English Legal System and how organised the Courts, the System of Justice and the role and powers of the police are. Guide candidates learn also the differences between English and Scottish Laws.
- *Architecture* including a good general knowledge of architectural styles and periods from prehistory to the present, together with an understanding of the chief building materials used in Britain and significant architects affecting British buildings.
- *British Countryside and Country Crafts*, including a general knowledge of the major farming regions and their physical relationships, and the ability to recognise common farm animals and crops, buildings and farm machinery, as well as well-known country crafts and trades.
- *Religion*, including an outline knowledge of the main religious beliefs, sects and religious changes in Britain up to the present day.
- *Monarchy & Government*, including a knowledge of the historical growth of the Monarchy and Parliament, Royal Ceremonial occasions, parades and customs, etc. and the present Royal Family. The organisation of Parliament, its buildings, officials and operation and the systems of elections, the role and powers of local government bodies.

- *British Wildlife*, including the ability to recognise common species of British wild birds, flowers and trees, animals and garden flowers, together with a knowledge of the location of some famous garden, wild life reserves, etc.
- *The Arts*, including a background knowledge of notable composers and performers in English Music, Theatre and Ballet, Painting and Sculpture. Knowledge of the historical growth of these Arts and the location of festivals, famous paintings, major theatres, music schools, orchestras, etc.
- *Education*, including a knowledge of the historical growth of the English educational system, the hierarchy of educational provision up to and including university and professional training, and the role and function of the private, public school sector, etc.
- *Finance & Taxation*, including a knowledge of the British taxation system as it relates to both industry, commerce and individuals (with particular reference to guiding and tourism). Also, guide trainees will learn a more detailed knowledge of establishing and running as self-employed individuals, which includes knowledge of business matters to include liability, PAYE, national insurance, social security, employment law and general insurance requirements, as well as knowledge of First Aid and emergency procedures.

**b) *Local/regional knowledge*** (subjected to each concerned region).

**c) *Guiding techniques and communications*** (details are covered in Tour Guide Training Examination: General Technique).

### 9.3.2 UK Guide Training Examination:

In order to pass the guide training course and receive a Blue Badge, which is the symbol of the Tourist Board Registered Guide qualification throughout England, guide trainees are assessed on:

- a) *In-dept local knowledge against a background of national core knowledge.*
- b) *Presentation skills on foot, at site and on a coach..*

Guide trainees are required to take a final written examination to display their knowledge essential of guiding, which normally takes two hours. They have to answer the questions briefly, either in one word or a sentence. However, the assessment of the guide trainees' presentation skills will covers two areas, namely:

- b1) *General technique*
- b2) *Presentation of knowledge*

**b1) General technique:** In this aspect, all guide trainees have to demonstrate their ability covering the areas of:

- *Audibility*, in terms of correct volume and whether it is too quiet or too loud.
- *Clarity of speech*, in terms of the distinction of words.
- *Variation of voice*, in terms of the change of speed, pitch or emphasis.
- *Acceptable use of words*, in terms of plain, simple, language to make sure that tourists understand, and good flow of the commentary.
- *Addressing groups*, in terms of eye contact.

- *Rapport*, in terms of friendly, sociable, smiling and easy stance of candidates.

When guide trainees are evaluated on a coach, the following areas will be taken into consideration:

- *Microphone technique* whether it can be properly used to produce an audible and clear voice.
- *Indication of sights* whether they are omitted or well indicated. This can lead to a pass or fail point.
- *Timing*, in terms of whether the candidates talked about a sight in time to see it.

If the commentary is delivered while at the *site* or *on foot*, guide trainees are expected to be aware of *what* to inform their tourists about, such as *meeting points*, *local practical requirement* and *facilities*. In giving this type of commentary, some other vital aspects are also assessed, such as:

- *Positioning*, whether the candidates properly position themselves, not to obstruct the path, so that the tourists can clearly see the objects mentioned.
- *Always talk facing the group*. This is another important area, which could fail the candidates if it is ignored.
- *Never begin before the group is assembled*. This will also lead to a pass or fail.

**b2) Presentation of knowledge:** This aspect will appraise guide trainees' commentary in terms of:



- *Accuracy* of their knowledge which is also leading to a pass or fail.
- *Selection*, in terms of the comprehensive and balanced commentary.
- *Continuity*, which is linking and not isolated facts.
- *Interest*, in terms of how interestingly the commentary is given and whether the candidates add humour and anecdotes to it.

The passing score is 70% with a score of not less than 50% of each category (Interview 5). Guide trainees who seem unable to cope with the strenuous courses in the first 3 months will be advised to withdraw with a refund. A guide tutor (Interview 6) reveals that guide trainees who fail in any category are entitled to re-sit until they pass. However, they have to pay for examination (and re-sit) fees every time, for example:

### **9.3.3 Examination Fee:**

- *Part One* (Written & Tate Gallery Practical): £ 78.00-82.00+VAT
- *Part Two* (Written, Coach & Site Practical): £ 260.00+VAT
- Or Combined Parts One and Two: £ 335.00+VAT

It has been previously mentioned that in Thailand, guide training establishments are run by non-tour guides who are allowed by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) to set up their own guide training curriculum, which is expected to be based on the National Tour guide Training Syllabus Guideline, and final examination criteria. However, since there is no close supervision from the TAT, the quality of the training curriculum varies rather significantly from one training establishment to another. This inevitably results in different achievement of guide training and, consequently, qualities of guide trainees.

By comparison, a Blue Badge guide-training course, though organised in different parts of the UK, has been run by *only* experienced Blue Badge guides, with a similar high standard in guide training curriculum approved by national and local tourist boards (Interview 7). Therefore, it is not surprising to find that Blue Badge guide trainees are able to work immediately on their first working day. Besides, Directors of Studies of Blue Badge guide training course will meet up regularly at least twice a year, to discuss guide training-related issues to ensure the quality of guide training and guide trainees.

#### **9.4 Conclusion**

The fundamental differences between Thailand and the UK Blue Badge guide training curriculum are that guiding techniques and communications skills have not been addressed in Thailand. In the UK, these two elements are treated as significant as -if not more than- a guiding knowledge itself.

Obviously, a guide training curriculum in Thailand contains a good coverage of subjects and relevant information necessary for guiding. However, this seems to be too intensive for most guide trainees to assimilate, given the fact that the length of the training period is relatively short (approximately 12-16 weeks). Besides, this three-month period also includes both short and long field trips, as well as language study.

Whereas a UK Blue Badge guide training curriculum is proportionately suitable to the training period covering approximately 28 weeks (2 winters) which also includes a two-day intensive communications skills seminar (Interview 8). Guide trainees will have at least 20 days for doing a practical task, i.e., practising giving a commentary on coach, at sites and on foot. These guide trainees will gain a considerable guiding experience by practising over and over again under the close supervision of experienced guide trainers and through peer assistance.

However, the UK guide training curriculum does not cover some useful aspects which Thai curriculum does, for instance, a general knowledge about hotel, courier work (tour guide working process), customs procedures, tourism resources conservation. By the same token, the Thai guide-training curriculum has ignored certain subject

areas available in the UK curriculum, i.e., Law (covering some vital aspects of Thai legal system), Finance and Taxation (particularly in the aspects of business and managerial skills).

But what seems to be lacking in the curriculum of both countries is the key knowledge about marketing and how to research effectively. Despite the fact that a guiding career hardly offers any progress for tour guides, marketing knowledge may significantly contribute to their career advancement if they want to establish their own business in the tourism industry in the future. Undoubtedly, tour guiding is a career that requires tour guides to do extensive research in order to update and enhance their guiding knowledge. Therefore, the author maintains that it is necessary for them to learn how to research various subjects in a systematic manner.

A good guide-training curriculum is, indisputably, a solid platform for producing 'quality' guides (Interview 9). Guiding techniques and communication skills 'must' be included and 'seriously' put into practice, under the proper supervision of experienced guides. Though some tour guides may possess language skills and good guiding knowledge, they still could not be regarded as professional tour guides if they are incapable of transmitting their knowledge.

By comparison with England, where the National Tourist Board has established a core curriculum for over three decades for guides in all regions of the country, to which local tourist boards add regional courses, Thailand has just recently set up a national guide training curriculum guideline allowing local/regional training establishments to add local/regional subjects where appropriate and relevant. Certainly, it is suitable to say that it may take some time for Thailand guide training organisers to redress discrepancies in their curriculum.

## Chapter 10

### Conclusions

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**This chapter, apart from suggesting areas of further research, presents a summary of the key aspects that affect tour guides' performance, such as the significance of tour guide's right attitudes, the acquisition of suitable candidates, and guide training systems. Also, tour guides' performance relating to visitor experience, tour guides' important attributes, and factors influencing tour guides' performance will also be taken into account. Though visitor experience can be influenced by several other factors, it is suggested that their satisfaction during the guided tour is largely dependent on their tour guides' efficiency and professionalism.**

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#### 10.1 Introduction

It has been recognised that tour guides' standard and professionalism worldwide vary significantly, mainly due to a lack of proper training covering tour guide training management and guide training curriculum (Pond, 1993; Ap & Wong 2001). The general public's perception of tour guides' status has been less favourable since the appearance of tour guides in the ancient Roman Empire up to the end of the twentieth century: tour guides have garnered a mixed reputation: they were perceived as nuisances, unscrupulous, and charlatans (Holloway, 1993). Despite this, tour guides are, however, nowadays playing a major role in contributing to their country, region, or city in several positive and significant ways.

The research findings discovered that in the UK, Blue-Badge tour guides have a very high standard of guiding knowledge and techniques resulting from the good

management of tour guide training and their training philosophy. With a small class size, longer training period and effective guide training management, the end product is evidently of good quality. Therefore, it is not surprising that Blue Badge tour guides are regarded as one of the world's truly professionals.

By comparison, tour guides in Thailand have yet attained international recognition as such. This is chiefly attributable to several factors including a large class size, insufficient qualified guide trainers/lecturers and, most crucially, the lack of effective tour guide training management. Newly graduated tour guides are required by their employers to be re-trained for another 3-24 months by observing and following experienced tour guides. For those who are currently practising tour guides, it appears that tour guide training establishments in Thailand have not yet had any refresher courses for them; whereas the UK Blue Badge tour guide training organisers have been consistently doing such courses in order to enhance and update existing tour guides' general and guiding knowledge.

The research results also indicated that there are other pivotal factors contributing to the poor recognition of a guiding career in Thailand, such as a lack of professionalism, insecure job and low guiding rate. These undoubtedly have resulted in an *expectation* of commission among most tour guides in Thailand. The majority of guide candidates admitted that a *commission* was their prime motivation and that it was their most significant source of income. Therefore, they do *expect* additional income such as a *commission* earned from tourist-related establishments (jewellery shops, entertainment districts) to compensate for their low income during the off-peak tourist season.

In the UK, Blue Badge tour guides' main expectations for being tour guides seem to be firstly, intrinsic satisfaction; then secondly, social relationships and; thirdly, economics rewards. However, in Thailand, it is fair to say that since a guiding rate is relatively low, most new and experienced tour guides' main motivations for taking a guiding job appear to be firstly, economics rewards, or to be precise, a *high commission*, then secondly intrinsic satisfaction and, thirdly, social relationships.

Furthermore, few guide employers in Thailand pay guides a reasonable going rate due to a high competition among tour guides and a considerably higher supply of guides.

More importantly, tour operators and travel agents justify their guiding fee as reasonable by citing that they have to retrain these new guides, since the guide training course generally lasts for only approximately 12-16 weeks. Most guide employers have agreed that this unavoidably leads to a poor standard and quality among new guides and, thus, used this as a pretext to give them low guiding fees.

Conclusively, in order to successfully produce professional tour guides, it is important that guide training organisers have to take such considerations into account as having guide trainees with right attitudes, personality and a small class size. Besides, a balanced interview panel, sufficient guiding practice and suitable guiding knowledge and techniques provision are as important as having experienced guide trainers/lecturers, strenuous entrance and final examination and, last but not least, reasonably long training period.

Despite having several roles to play, one of tour guides' most vital roles is that of a "conduit". It is suggested that tour guides who are able to efficiently act as a 'conduit' are nothing short of professional, since the effect of the conduit's responsibility is arguably by far the most powerful and long-lasting (Pond, 1993). Nevertheless, Pond further advanced that the conduit concept does not merely highlight tour guides' performance, but the local culture, the visitor's importance and travelling experience. The conduit concept, according to Pond's interpretation, is perhaps the most difficult to understand and describe, since it requires the highest level of maturity and courage of the tour guides to 'subordinate' themselves to their tour participants and their experience. To quote Pond's statement (1993: 134): "It is the innate understanding of when to be silent, when to step back, when to encourage, when to move on".

Therefore, it can be said that, tour guides who strive for professionalism and career success must possess the ability to perform their function in a variety of roles. They also need to understand their roles and strike a delicate balance while performing their duty.

Aside from which they need to have the right attitudes in the guiding job. Not only do their employers expect them to represent their company well whilst working, but

government tourist agencies, attractions, and local people also hope to be portrayed in the best manner.

## **10.2 Why do tour guides need to have 'right attitudes'?**

To what extent do tour guides need to have the right attitudes in their guiding career? Undoubtedly, a tour guiding is one of the most demanding service industry jobs. However, the tour guide's conception and understanding of the term 'service' could vary significantly from one tour guide to another.

It is widely acknowledged, especially among tour guides' employers, that tour guides make or break the tour. An owner of a tour operating company was quoted (Pond, 1993:65) as saying that:

"You can, and often do, plan a tour for the better part of a year, working with a nice budget which allows you to stay in the finest hotels and dine at the best restaurants, and all is for naught if you don't have competent guides".

The impact of tour guides' performance upon their tour participants is so immense that tour operators/travel agents are extremely careful in choosing their tour guides, for their reputation is in their tour guides' hand. During the interview, they have to ensure that their guide candidates possess the right attitudes, personality and, last but not least, abilities in guiding.

Though tour guides have many roles to play while guiding their tour participants around, their perception of their roles and attitude towards their guiding career is undoubtedly crucial to their tour participants' impression and travelling experience. It is logical to suggest that people who choose a guiding career choose a career of service. Some people might regard it as demeaning if they have to serve others, and admitting that the customer is always right or service is synonymous with servitude.

The author firmly believes that should a tour guide desire to have the right attitude, s/he must change from "inside"; it should not be the change for merely the change's sake.

It is also still debatable whether tour guides can learn significant attributes, such as common sense, a sense of humour, caring attitude, etc. To some guides and guide trainers/lecturers, these qualities can be learnt and taught to a certain degree; to others, especially some experienced tour guides, they are impossible to be taught or learnt; it is a matter of “tour guides either have it, or don’t”. These qualities are arguably innate and thus not subject to teaching or learning.

People working in the service industry need to have the right attitude if they want to successfully satisfy their customers. Undeniably, successful people working in the service industry are those who have suitable attributes and, more significantly, are willing to ‘please’ their customers. Tourism, regarded as one of the most rapidly growing service businesses in the world, is a case in point. The service industry, be it hotel, entertainment, finance, etc. is the most highly intensive and intimate interactions between the service providers and their customers. Without doubt, customer satisfaction could only be achieved through their staff’s quality and efficiency.

By the same token, in tour guiding, visitor satisfaction determines tour guides’ success or failure.

Therefore, tour guiding, regarded as having one of the most intensive interaction between tour guides and their tour participants (Parasuraman *et al*, 1993) has to depend on someone who has a ‘service minded’ attitude. Indeed, the more intensive the interaction is, the higher the level of tour guides’ ‘service’ attitude is demanded.

### **10.3 How to Get the ‘Right’ Guide Candidates?**

Tour operating business is an increasingly competitive segment of the tourism industry, and so is a guiding career. Therefore, it is not surprising that tour operators are extremely careful in choosing their tour guides, since they cannot afford to risk their reputation. It is necessary for tour guides’ employers to have suitable guide candidates with the right attitudes from the very beginning, since it is the only guarantee that their tour operating business will be successful, and tour participants’ travelling experience can be enhanced.



For guide training organisers, before taking any guide applicants, a good recruiting system is required. During the selection process, which is regarded as one of the most vital stages of the tour guide training system, a clear policy guideline must be outlined and implemented, in relation to types and qualification of ideal but practical guide applicants.

In addition, the selection panel must consist of 'qualified' representatives of concerned parties, such as that of tour operator, tourist board, experienced guide, guide trainer/lecturer, and guide training organiser itself, if the 'balanced' perspective is to be struck regarding guide applicants' suitability.

The most important question is: How could the right balance of the selection panel be achieved?

#### **10.4 Key differences in recruiting process: suitability vs. practicality**

Arguably, the interviews' analysis of concerned individuals and parties in the U.K. and Thailand has provided an 'insight' into a better understanding of tour guide training organisers and tour guides themselves, particularly in relation to their professionalism and discrepancies. Most importantly, the outcome can be used as a 'compass' or a broad guideline for tour guide training organisers and concerned parties to modify their guide training systems, as well as training philosophy.

There is no doubt that all tour guide-training organisers want the most suitable candidates. During their selection stages, they certainly look for those who have suitable personality, motivation and guiding language competency. Yet, in practice, how much compromise they have to make between their economic viability and applicants' attributes still remains open to discussion.

For instance, in Thailand, tour guide training is very competitive, and tour guide organisers have to accommodate a rather large class size (75 or more) in order to survive economically. Thus, each guide training institution tends to take on average 150 guide candidates per course/year. The suitable guide candidates appear to be those who have good linguistic ability rather than good personality. The reason being that if

the candidates' guiding language is insufficient, to improve their language ability within a 12-16 weeks period of training time is hardly possible. Apart from *time* constraint, a wide variety of subjects to be taught is also another crucial factor for the selection committee to conclude that linguistic ability should outweigh personality.

Though the author disagrees with the rather large class size that, eventually, will unavoidably diminish the quality of the end product, he quite agrees that it is sensible for Thai guide training organisers to adopt such an approach in giving priority to guide candidates' linguistic merit rather than personality, because:

In the case of Thailand, tour guiding in foreign languages does depend more on tour guides' language than personality, because finding candidates with language ability is not an easy task, owing to the fact that foreign language is not usually used in Thai people's daily life.

Guide candidates with good language ability are generally those with good educational backgrounds. One of the Director of Studies of Thai guide training organisers has stressed that:

"Guide candidates with higher education can take on board the subjects taught much quicker than those who have lower education. If possible, we certainly choose the ones who have both good language and personality".

It has to be pointed at this stage that prior to the proclamation of the 'Tourism Business and Guide Act in 1994, guide applicants were required to have a minimum of junior high school educational background (equivalent to "O" level). However, after the Act was issued, they must have a minimum of senior high school (equivalent to "A" level) educational background before applying to be trained as tour guides.

Therefore, all tour guides in the early days were self-taught tour guides, and a certain number of them were those whose language ability was derived from either having overseas experience or contacts with foreign tourists, to a certain extent.

Given the reasons mentioned above, guide-training organisers in Thailand do not seem to have many alternatives but to give priority to those guide candidates with good guiding language. Considering the fact that tour guides have to play a variety of roles simultaneously, the practicality of this policy (guiding language competency preference approach) still gives rise to further debate.

By contrast, UK Blue Badge tour guides who guide in English are generally English native speakers. They can also guide in other languages if they can use other languages fluently and pass the training course. However, non-native English speakers would not be selected to be trained as English-speaking tour guides, unless they can use English as well as the native speakers, which is extremely unlikely.

For non-British, they are generally trained to guide in their own mother tongue, and all subjects have to be learnt in English (lecture, guiding practice). Only in their examination do they have to give a commentary in the guiding language chosen under the monitoring and supervision of an expert or a tour guide in that language.

It seems that UK tour guide organisers are in a better position than Thai ones in that they have a wider choice and can select guide applicants who have a suitable personality (because they will guide in English which is their mother tongue), language fluency and right motivations.

Nevertheless, they might encounter similar problem, as do Thai training organisers: personality against language ability. This problem could arise when they have to select guide candidates who want to guide in other languages apart from their own mother tongue. There are two implications:

If the guide applicants are English-native speakers, the interviewing panel will look for those who have both good personality and language ability.

Ideally, they would rather have the native speakers of the particular language to be trained as tour guides of that language. However, they would take any guide applicants who can use that language well, if there are not any native speakers of the particular language who apply. For example, they require 10 Japanese tour guides to meet the market demand, and only two Japanese apply; then the guide training

organisers have to resort to any other nationality who could speak and understand the Japanese language well.

However, the Director of Studies of Blue Badge guides, London, has pointed that in any case, suitable personality and motivations would be the first priority. She has also revealed that due to high demand for Japanese-speaking guides, they had to send British Blue Badge tour guides to Japan to learn and improve their Japanese language

In Thailand, tour guiding is, by law, restricted only to Thai citizens. Naturalised Thais have to pass a Thai language examination (Pratom 6 or primary school) prior to their application to be trained as tour guides. They are required to prove that they have a sufficient basic knowledge of Thai language in both speaking and reading/writing, which could be helpful in guiding tourists around Thailand.

In addition, Thai guide training organisers also require that guide candidates of any other languages (apart from English) must have a rather fair knowledge of English because all subjects are taught in English. Naturally, those applying to be trained as English-speaking tour guides should have a sound knowledge of English, the better language ability they have, the more chance there is that they would be selected.

Nevertheless, during the guide-training course, guide-training organisers generally provide a minimum of 30 hours of guiding language training to supplement and enhance their candidates' language competency. Regarding guide training manuals, most guide-training organisers have produced their own ones, and very few have their own guide training manuals in other languages apart from in Thai and in English. This is understandable because they are difficult to prepare and it is not economically viable in other languages.

Other key differences lie in the selection approaches adopted by both the guide-training organisers of the UK and Thailand. In the UK, the interviewing panel consists of qualified representatives of related organisations, such as that of the Guilds of Guide Lecturers, tourist board, tour operator, and Director of Studies himself or herself. By contrast, the interviewing panel in Thailand comprises of their institution's staff, some of whom may have guiding-related experience.

### 10.5 Key Quality of Tour Guides

The author desires to postulate that tour guides can significantly enhance their tour participants' experience, providing that they have both good guiding knowledge and communications techniques. Generally speaking, visitors' pleasant experience derived from their guided tour will be memorable and cherished long after they get back to their country (Sharpley, 1994).

Tour guides, after all, must realise that they are not merely 'representatives' of their country, region or city, but 'hosts' of their visitors at the same time. Visitors would certainly feel resentful if they get the 'cold' shoulder from their tour guide, since s/he may be the only person that these visitors come into contact with. On the contrary, if they are made 'welcome' by their tour guides as soon as they touch the ground of the host country, their first impression would undoubtedly be favourably formed at the outset.

Though, admittedly, there may be some unpredictable factors, e.g., accommodation, environment, weather, etc., which could unavoidably cause hazards and affect the visitor's travelling experience. However, the visitors would not feel so hopeless provided they could turn to their tour guides for proper advice and support of morale. But without their tour guide's efficiency, empathy and understanding, those visitors' travelling experiences would definitely be something they do not want to remember.

In order to satisfy their tour participants' need and requirements, it is important that tour guides must be able to play effectively different roles at the same time. They have to understand that one of tourists' main aspirations for travelling is to 'relax and enjoy themselves'; thus they should make sure that their commentary does not load their tour participants with 'heavy' and boring commentary.

There are, however, exceptions for certain types of visitors (i.e. a special interest group) who are 'keen' on details of a particular subject, such as bird watching, historical, archaeological studies. Thus, it has to be borne in mind that a group of tour participants may consist of people with vastly different interests and backgrounds; tour guides must be receptive and able to strike the balance in their commentary.

Arguably, tour guides who are well trained in terms of guiding knowledge and communicative/guiding techniques are certainly able to deal with various types of tourists in their best manner. They can effectively gauge the audience's interests and moderate their commentary accordingly. Professional tour guides are arguably those who possess suitable attributes and have also been trained to impart their knowledge in a skilled manner.

It seems that the ability to assess their tour participants can be achieved only when tour guides have successfully 'broken the ice', and are able to establish a good rapport with their visitors. Some tour guides may find it relatively difficult to 'strike the right chord', while others may not encounter any difficulties in so doing. What makes the difference in this respect is tour guides' own attitudes and personality.

Naturally, if tour guides succeed in establishing a good relationship with their tour participants, especially prior to the commencement of the guided tour, they will certainly have less difficulty in identifying with, and satisfying, their tour participants. The responses from their audience, and the interaction among the tour participants themselves, will help their tour guides to correctly measure their audience's interest and thus modify their commentary accordingly.

Therefore, it would be wrong to suggest that any tour guides can enhance their tour participants' travelling experience without taking into consideration certain crucial elements namely, guiding knowledge and communicative skills/guiding techniques, right attitudes and personality.

### **10.6 Key Attitudes and Personalities of Successful Tour Guides**

An experienced guide trainer/lecturer firmly believes that though everybody can be a tour guide through training, but none would be successful without proper attitudes and personality. So, what then are the required attitudes and personality?

Firstly, tour guides must be 'caring'. The feeling of 'care' for other people must be a genuine one and come from the bottom of their heart. Tourists who are cared for will certainly feel warm and comfortable. It has to be remembered that tour participants who feel ignored by their tour guide will also be disinterested in him/her.

Secondly, tour guides must like meeting people, especially foreigners. With this kind of attitude, tour guides will be 'outgoing' and initiate interaction with their tour participants. It is important that they are also optimistic and have an open-minded attitude. Tour guides who are pessimistic will find it hard to like people including their tour participants.

Thirdly, tour guides must have 'service minded attitude'. In addition to giving a commentary, tour guides have to serve and look after their tour participants. Tour guides who do not have service minded attitude will feel that they 'have to' service their tour participants because it is their duty. There is a distinction between doing something out of 'duty' and 'willingness'. Tour participants can always 'sense' these differences.

It is, however, necessary to say that though tour guides' 'duty oriented' attitude is quite acceptable and can help them carry out their job, it is, however, not generally appreciated from the customer's perspective. The author believes that the end results are different in terms of tour guide's performance quality and visitors' satisfaction. "Duty-oriented" tour guides will not be giving one hundred per cent of their efforts; therefore it is unlikely that tour participants would be impressed with the 'superficial' service.

By contrast, the end results derived from "service-oriented" tour guides' totally committed effort will undoubtedly be satisfying and long memorable among their tour participants.

Besides, tour guides with this positive attitude will have an inclination to be thinking of their visitors first, in terms of safety, security and other general well being. To put it bluntly, there is nothing worse than those tour guides who make their tour participants feel that their tour guides lack empathy (Albrecht & Zemke, 1985).

### **10.7 How Can These Desired Attitudes Be Achieved and Sustained?**

First of all, it is still a debatable issue regarding whether or not certain positive attitudes for tour guides, which were earlier discussed, could be achieved. The Director of Studies of Blue Badge tour guide has maintained that:

"There are some qualities that – though not impossible – are difficult to teach. Such as a sense of humour, caring, optimism, service minded attitude. If guide candidates are really determined to learn, these attributes can be achieved, to a certain degree".

However, experienced tour guides have disagreed and strongly argued that such attributes are impossible to learn. As one of these tour guides put it:

"From my 30 years experience, I can assure you that there are many subjects that you can learn and achieve, and there are some things impossible to learn and achieve. How can one learn how to achieve a sense of leader, humour, common sense, caring? If you have it, you have it. If you don't, you don't. Simple as that".

Nevertheless, the researcher quite agrees with one of the experienced Blue Badge guide trainer/lecturer, who has convincingly advanced that:

"There is nothing impossible to learn or to teach if both the learner and teacher are really determined to achieve their objective. The degree of success is also dependent upon time, effort, teaching methods, teachers and, above all, the learner's inspiration itself".

It must be remembered that, for the sake of argument, to achieve the previously mentioned attributes depends also on several other key factors, and the extent of success in this matter is very difficult to predict. Another tour guide trainer/lecturer has pointed that:

"By giving guide trainees a repeatedly and consistently good demonstration, as well as close supervision and constructive feedback,



together with good commitment and inspiration, and sufficient amount of time, there is no doubt why guide trainees would not be able to improve themselves. The most important thing to remember is that all changes must largely come from 'within' the guide trainees themselves"

Since tour guiding is very seasonal, tour guides have to work as hard as possible during the high tourist season to earn enough income to compensate for the off-peak tourist season. Besides, the nature of a guiding job is very demanding in terms of time and dedication, thus a lot of tour guides have to sacrifice other social commitments and family time. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that most tour guides have become 'hard' and stressed out people, thanks to hard work and arduous conditions.

Thus, it is fair to say that to sustain such attributes as a sense of humour, caring, and service minded attitude could be rather difficult for some tour guides. Once they become stressed out, they tend to be less receptive.

### **10.8 Factors influencing tour guides' performance**

Tour guides in big cities (such as Bangkok, London, Bath) seem to have a guiding job the whole year round; whereas those guiding in small cities or towns tend to have a guiding job only during a high tourist season. Thus it is not uncommon that some tour guides have to reduce their guiding rate to survive. Those who could not get enough guiding work have to resort to some temporary job, such as teaching music, language or even an office job to supplement their income.

As far as the guiding rate is concerned, the rate for UK Blue Badge tour guide is relatively good (see more details in Ch.8); whereas Thai tour guides receive a rather poor guiding rate. It is not surprising to find that, for Thai tour guides, a 'commission' is highly sought after. However, the commission derived from shops and selling additional tours is unpredictable.

To be precise, for Thai tour guides, commission particularly from jewellery shops and other tourist-related activities is their primary income. Commission, apart from freedom of work and chances of meeting foreigners to brush up and improve their languages, has motivated most guide applicants. Some have admitted that very few

people would want to be tour guides if there was no commission involved. Therefore, it would be quite right to conclude that commission has been playing the most important role in tour guides' working life. It is also the lifeblood and an integral part of the travel business of the Thai tourism industry.

It is interesting to point out that while many UK Blue Badge tour guides could live relatively comfortably on their guiding fees, Thai tour guides, on the contrary, could also live very comfortably on their commission alone. Some Thai guides have revealed that it is not impossible for them, within 1-2 years of their guiding career, to purchase and own property and real estate rather easily thanks to the commission earned.

Nevertheless, it would be too premature to say that, in case of Thailand, a *commission* has, in effect, significantly influenced tour guides' performance. Yet it is undeniable that commission, to a great extent, affects tour guides' morale. However, the author would like to draw the conclusion that there is a correlation between tour guides' morale and performance. For 'efficient' tour guides, good morale can certainly enhance their performance. However, for those who are 'inefficient' *per se*, to what extent good morale can improve their performance is still questionable.

The reason that inefficient tour guides can hardly improve their guiding performance through commission lie in the fact that 'inefficiency' is actually dependent on several pertinent factors, such as the lack of certain key attributes, proper training, guiding knowledge and techniques. A balanced combination of these elements will ultimately generate efficient tour guides who will, in turn, produce a good commentary, and hence a good performance. However, certain factors, i.e., morale, tiredness, pressure, etc. could certainly have an impact on their performance, to a certain degree.

However, those tour guides who seem to lack the balanced ingredients of the chief attributes and, above all, a good training system will find it difficult to improve and enhance their performance, by depending on morale boosted by commission. It would be too unrealistic to assume that a good commission is a performance enhancer. Yet it may be logical to suggest that a commission does have a psychological effect on those tour guides who expect it. By the same token, for those tour guides who do not expect

any commission, their performance is not going to be affected either positively or negatively. On the contrary, if a commission is expected, the effects it has on those tour guides can be illustrated in the following diagram proposed by the author:

**Table 12: Correlation between commission and performance:**

(Between effective and ineffective tour guides expecting a commission)

	Effective guide (Commission expected)	Ineffective guide (Commission expected)
Performance Commission	Performance	Performance
Good commission	Enhanced	Not enhanced
Poor commission	Deteriorated	Deteriorated

Therefore, it can be summarised that ‘commission’ is the most important factor affecting Thai tour guides’ performance, not least because it is expected. Besides, it is the only key motivation for people who want to be tour guides in the first place. Undoubtedly, in the case of effective tour guides, a good commission helps improve their morale and performance; a poor commission means low morale and poor performance. By contrast, in case of ineffective tour guides, good commission certainly boosts their morale but not performance; poor commission means low morale and hence even poorer performance.

Apart from the author’s observation (as a tour participant) during the guided tours in Thailand, some tour guides have conveyed (see in Ch.5) that it is important to perform as best as they can in order to satisfy their tour participants. Admittedly, a commission is their main concern and arguably the most vital income. Thus, they have to make

sure that before the guided tour comes to an end in each day, they have set aside sufficient time to discreetly entice their tour participants in relation to the quality of the “product” that they might be interested to purchase before the commentary finishes.

As it happened, after the guided tour ended, the tour coach would terminate, in most cases, at the pre-arranged souvenir shops before a transportation was arranged to take them back to their accommodation. Tour participants who chose to get back to their hotels out right will be transported by either their tour coach or the vehicles provided by the souvenir shops. The author noted that, after a visit to the last attraction in the itinerary was completed and before the tour coach arrived at the Jewellery shop, the tour guide would “keenly” brief their tour participants about the superb quality and reasonable price of the ‘gemstones’ at the shop/factory where they were taken to. Most tour participants felt obliged to follow their tour guides’ advice to enter the factory and would be well taken care of by the factory/shop’s welcoming representatives.

Though some tourists disagreed with the idea of being *dropped* at the ‘shops’, even if they had been told that they could remain on the coach if so desired, after the tour ended, because it was not included in their tour itinerary. Some felt that the tour was not worthy of their money, since their tour guides rushed them from one attraction to the other. One of the visitors on a guided tour had commented with the researcher that:

"We want to spend more time on sightseeing tours, not on shopping. It is unfair that the tour company bring us to the place that is not included in our itinerary".

Though the majority of tour participants were pleased to have seen the process of gemstones production and, eventually, made some purchase, complaints of wasting time from a few frustrated tour participants were still being heard.

Some tour guides may not be so comfortable with such complaints, yet they argued that apart from the commission obtained from the ‘shops’, they have to abide by their tour company’s policy, in that tour participants must be *dropped* at the ‘shops’ to just

"have a look" around. They also have to make it clear, as a precaution measure, with their tour participants that they do not have to make any purchase if they do not want to, etc.

Compared to the UK guided tours to the Buckingham Palace, Tower of London, Windsor Castle and St. Paul's Cathedral, the author discovered that tour participants were simply told about the location of the souvenir shops and, above all, the time to get back to the tour coach. It is interesting to find that tour participants were not given any impression that their tour guides would entice them in any conceivable way.

To conclude, in Thailand, the tour guides' performance can be immensely affected by "commissions/tips". A guided tour coach full of tourists would significantly boost the tour guides' morale, thanks to a considerable commission and tips expected. Generally, tour guides earn more commission or bonus from both the shops and their employers if there are more tourists. For example, in one tour company, a tour guide, generally receiving Baht 350 (approx. £6) for a full day tour for a group of 1-4 tourists, would earn Baht 25 more per a tourist if the number of tourists increases to between 5 and 8, etc. Also, the commission they get from the shops is also commensurate with the number of their tour participants on a similar basis.

The commission given by shops to tour guides (can significantly vary from one shop to another) is generally based on two categories: 10-25% of the total purchases made, depending on quality and types of items. If no purchase made, tour guides still get 'incentive' on either the whole group or on a per head basis (the figures vary according to the agreement made).

For some tour guides, the potential commission and tips are so important to them that they would seem 'disinterested' in their tour participants or even get 'moody' if they have fewer tour participants than expected. It is not surprising that this kind of attitude and expectations would significantly affect their morale, performance and visitor satisfaction.

### 10.9 Commission: Blight or Blessing?

It is undeniable that a “commission” practice has been prevalent in a large number of countries, especially those popular with tourists from abroad. Though it is a much more common practice in most of the developing countries than the developed ones. Thailand is a classic example where all tour guides are familiar with this term and practice; whereas very few, if any, UK Blue Badge tour guides would have the idea of this commission practice.

As far as a commission practice is concerned, the interpretation of the term *commission* varies greatly. However, the commission practice discussed in this context is “a sum of money which tour guides or tour operators receive from the tourist-related business (souvenir shops, restaurants, entertainment districts, etc.) after their tourists made a purchase or a visit”. Thus, it is fair to say that “a commission practice” appeared in Thailand since the advent of Thai tour guides over three decades ago.

To some tourists, they believe a commission is a ‘vampire’ which sucks their blood to feed tour guides, tour operators, since the items they bought must have been marked up, hence resulting in their being exploited. To others, it is a practice inherent in the tourist-related activities. They made a purchase because they trust their tour guides about the items’ quality, and they are willing to pay more. If they go to buy the products themselves, they may pay less but get “lower quality” or even “fake” items.

Whether or not the above assumption is correctly justified, the author believes that it would be too premature to conclude without a further discussion.

Nevertheless, to most, if not all, tour guides (in Thailand), a commission is a ‘blessing’, and highly regarded as their ‘lifeblood’, without which they find it hard to survive. To some tour operators, who send their tourists to those ‘shops’, a commission is treated as their important supplemental income, which would in turn help them to stay competitive in their business. The commission income enables them to subsequently sell cheaper tours than their rivals to overseas tour operators.

Thanks to the 'special agreements' between these tour operators and the tourist-related businesses, the tour operators would receive a monthly commission from the shops to which they send their tourists. Though the exact figure is not revealed, the commission earned is estimated to be in the region of 15-25%, depending on the types and quality of the items bought, and of the total amount of purchases made by their tourists.

To a certain number of souvenir shops, etc., the commission is their most effective marketing ploy to sustain their business and compete with their counterparts. Apart from having 'special contracts' with tour operators assuring a regular supply of tourists, they also give a commission to tour guides, taxi drivers, or their potential brokers as an incentive for them to bring in more customers in the future.

Even the government's tourism body has to acknowledge that a commission practice has been, and will be more prevalent. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has added, in its standardised tour guide training course, a section dealing with ethics towards a commission, in order to set the guideline for tour guides on how to constructively deal with the commission.

Most tour guide training organisers have agreed that a commission is important for guides and addressed this issue by inviting some experienced tour guide to give a talk on this topic. Interestingly, though, some guide training organisers, on the contrary, have revealed that they did not actually agree with the commission practice, and have emphasised that their guide trainees would be instilled against the idea of taking a commission.

Arguably, the idea of discouraging Thai tour guides to take a commission would hardly materialise in practice, unless they are given enough guiding fees. Guiding career is highly competitive and seasonal, in addition to a relatively low going rate. To expect Thai tour guides to simply live on their guiding fees would be rather naïve and unrealistic, because very few tour guides, if any, could simply live on guiding fees alone.

Though some tour guide trainees may have felt a little awkward in taking commission in the early stage of their guiding career, it is most likely that, sooner rather than later, they will be able to adjust themselves quickly and accordingly.

To summarise, whether or not a commission practice is unethical depends on several factors, i.e., the circumstances and the people involved. A commission is not a good or a bad thing in itself. It can be interpreted as either a positive or a negative practice depending on “ who ” administers it and, most importantly, “how” it is exploited. It would be unfair that anyone would pass their judgement without taking into account all factors and scenarios concerned. The author believes that the commission per se is similar to a bonus or an incentive, in that it is employed by commercial and business sectors to increase sales and boost their employees’ morale. It would be appropriate to say that a commission is an acceptable practice as long as it is not expected and abused.

#### **10.10 The Commission’s Intangible Benefits to Tourists**

To begin this discussion, it is sensible to further hypothesise that a commission does no harm to parties and individuals concerned if it is systematically monitored and controlled.

Tourists, in particular, will get intangible benefits in terms of ‘good value for money’, which means ‘cheaper’ package tour from their travel/tour operators at home. However, ‘cheaper’ is hardly accompanied by ‘good value’, because in most cases compromises have to be made between quality and cost.

The tourism industry is arguably one of the fastest growing and most competitive businesses in the world. In order to survive and sustain their businesses, tour operators and travel agents must have an edge over their counterparts in terms of cheaper package tour pricing. One effective approach frequently adopted is to attract their mass potential customers by offering lower prices for their travelling package. This cheaper package tour will certainly give people who are cost conscious and, especially, those with low disposable income the opportunity to travel.



The reason some foreign travel agents/tour operators can offer cheaper package tour to Thailand, for instance, to their prospective customers is that they are offered competitive quotations from their Thai counterparts. The fact that those Thai counterparts can sell cheaper tours to them is obvious: the commission earned from “shops” will compensate for their losses due to lower quotations. Therefore, the commission is, in effect, an intangible benefit to parties concerned, in particular to the tourists themselves.

The other intangible advantage tourists receive is that their tour guides will be responsible in getting the item exchanged or a refund for them if something goes wrong. They are assured that when making a purchase in the shops they are taken to in Thailand, there is a guarantee of product quality and satisfaction. ‘The special agreements’ between tour operators and shops also cover tourists’ satisfaction and quality of any items bought in that it is genuine and tourists can get exchange or refunded.

Tour operators will have to make sure that their tourists will not be cheated and will be responsible for making them happy. Compared to other tourists who might venture to buy items from shops themselves, and often end up getting low quality or fake items, or being ripped off or both, those escorted tourists would undoubtedly have a better peace of mind.

The key question here is: To what extent could a commission practice be monitored and controlled? Nobody is going to complain as long as individuals and parties concerned are benefited from such a commission. It is not surprising that cheap package tours to Thailand are getting more attractive and that they have brought more tourists to Thailand every year. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is not going to discourage a commission practice as long as overseas visitors are well satisfied and nobody makes an issue out of it. Most importantly, the government is not going to pass any law that would jeopardise the number of tourist arrivals whose expenses and expenditure are substantially and significantly contributing to the government’s political credibility and stability owing to an increase of foreign exchange earnings, job creation, national/regional development and income redistribution.

### **10.11 The Quest for sustainable quality and professionalism**

With the rapid spreading use of the computer and the internet world-wide, thanks to the progress and advancement of the information technology, the travellers of the new millennium and beyond are likely to be much more both information and technology-oriented than their predecessors were. It is not surprising that the future generation of travellers will be better equipped with virtually all kinds of knowledge and travel-related information, because the information and details of their destinations are at their fingertips. It is fair to say that the more knowledgeable about tourist destinations they are, the higher expectation of the service from their service provider, especially tour guides, they have.

Besides, it is predicted that by the new millennium and beyond, tourism will become the biggest industry in many more countries of the world. People will travel more due to the advancement of technology, which makes their travel faster, easier and more economical. This contrasts with the past, when travelling was largely restricted to the well-to-do people of the Western countries. Today, people in many developing countries have started to travel more owing to their growing economy and increasing prosperity.

It is no doubt that these tourists will demand much better service and quality product for their hard-earned money. Indeed, the professionalism and quality of their tour guides should meet their more demanding expectations, in order to satisfy their needs and requirements.

### **10.12 How to successfully raise tour guide's professionalism?**

In order to raise the standard, quality and professionalism of tour guides so that they can successfully satisfy their tour participants, it is necessary to address the core issues which involve several concerned parties in the tourism industry, namely the national tourist organisation, tour operators, professional tour guide association, guide training organisers and, last but not least, the practising tour guides.

However, it has to be clearly pointed out at this stage that the results of the findings dictate the author to focus specifically on those parties concerned in Thailand, because

there is still much more room for Thai tour guides to improve themselves to satisfy their tour participants. Also, the concerned organisations can learn how to help improve tour guides' professionalism and performance in order to enhance the travelling experience of the overseas visitors to Thailand.

On the contrary, UK Blue Badge tour guides, based on the results surveyed, had overwhelmingly satisfied their tour participants, and thus left no room for any further improvement. This does not necessarily mean that Blue Badge tour guides and their guide training system is perfect, but it would be extremely difficult for anybody to suggest anything better to emulate.

Again, the following suggestions and recommendations have to be properly applied to achieve a satisfactory result. The author seriously hopes that they would serve as a catalyst for changes and improvements in raising the practising tour guides' quality and, above all, to achieve the related parties' ultimate goal: visitor satisfaction.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand should:

- Strictly monitor and supervise tour guides training.
- Have a representative in the interviewing panel of guide applicants.
- Cut down the number of guide training institutions.
- Test tour guides' ability in guiding every two years before renewing guiding license.
- Name and shame tour guides who cheat their tour participants.
- Organise "Tour guide of the year" award ceremony.

- Encourage and give more authority to the Professional Tour Guide Association of Thailand (PGAT) to be responsible for organising a tour guide training programme.

The travel agents/tour operators should:

- Regularly and systematically evaluate their tour guides' performance.
- Adopt a performance-based pay scale approach.
- Provide reasonable job security to their tour guides.
- Pay reasonable good guiding fees to their tour guides.
- Prohibit their tour guides from expecting and getting a commission from shops.
- Stop taking their visitors to "jewellery shops" unless being requested.

The Professional Guide Association of Thailand (PGAT) should:

- Organise tour guide training programmes itself.
- Provide refresher and supplementary courses on a regular basis.
- Produce guide lists and distribute them to the institutions, organisations concerned both nationally and internationally.
- Set up a reasonably good guiding fee guideline so that tour guides need not expect a commission.
- Make sure that a guiding fee set up is strictly enforced.

Tour guide-training organisers should

- Have a balanced interviewing panel.
- Have a minimum of 12-month guide training course, instead of 3-4 months.
- Start focussing on a 'guiding practice' approach to give guide students more practical experience and relevant knowledge.
- Have a small class size.
- Give priority to guide applicants' personality and attitudes instead of language ability.
- Try to get guide candidates with right motivations.
- Try to get enough experienced guide lecturers/trainers.
- Modify the field trips to be more practical and fruitful.

Tour guides (see also Pond, 1993:230) should:

- Treat their tour participants with equal time, attention and dignity.
- Give accurate and interesting interpretations.
- Be objective and diplomatic.
- Keep their tour participants safe and comfortable.

- Never treat their tour participants having different cultures with contempt.
- Never solicit tips.

Above all, tour guides should always remember that:

"Guiding is a noble profession, one that many come to regard as a privilege. Those who are most successful and most highly respected are those who are not only willing to serve others but are, in fact, proud to serve" (Pond, 1993: 125).

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**Figure 1 :**

**Interview with tour guides**

**a) Interview with tour guide:**

1. How did you come into guiding?
2. How long have you been guiding?
3. What did you do before?
4. Besides guiding, what kind of job do you have?
5. If you also have other job, which is your main job then?
6. Do you think guiding is your career or hobby?
7. How would you progress in your guiding job within the next 5 - 10 years?
8. Are you a freelance or full time guide? Why do you want to work as a freelancer or full time guide? And which one do you prefer?
9. As a tour guide, who are you responsible to? Why?
10. What is a guiding job involved? What tasks are you expected to undertake?
11. What are key problems you experience during guiding?
12. How is guiding job different from what you expected when you first started training?
13. What do you think contribute to making a good tour guide?
14. What types of people make better guides? What types of people should not become tour guides?
15. Who is your ideal guide and why?
16. Would you call yourself a member of a profession as a guide?
17. What do you think about the term 'profession'?
18. Is a formal training important to make a guide professional?
19. How would you compare your performance with you colleagues?
20. Can or does your employer check on your work in any way?
21. Do you have to make reports on your work to anybody?
22. What do you like most and least about your job?
23. Do you sometimes find any aspects of your job embarrassing?
24. In your view, how helpful and useful is the Professional Guide Association?
25. What is your comment on guide trainers/lecturers?
26. How would you like the guide training course to be improved or altered?
27. How has guiding work affected your family, social commitments?
28. How would you like the government tourism body to raise the standard and professionalism of tour guides?
29. Would you continue to be a tour guide if there is little, if any, commission involved?
30. Is it possible for you to own guiding business yourself, why/why not?

**Figure 2 :**

**Interview with guides employers**

**b) Interview with guide employers:**

1. What is the difference between guides, couriers and escorts?
2. What is your role in relation to the guides?
3. What kind of background do the guides come from?
4. What do you look for when hiring guides?
5. Is age or sex a factor in your choice of guides?
6. What do you expect of your guides: What exactly are the functions a guide is expected to perform?
7. Have you any means of checking on a guide's performance?
8. Are there any guidelines laid down on uniform for the guides?
9. What are your views about the practice of tipping the guides?
10. How are salaries negotiated?
11. What is the guideline for the guiding fees for half day/full day tour?
12. What are your views on the training guides receive?
13. Are you happy with the course contents and training period? Why/why not?
14. What are the main factors contributing to successful guides?
15. Do you consider guiding is now a professional career?
16. What do you understand by professional in this sense?
17. Is there a career structure for the guides?
18. How much freedom does the guide have to make his own decisions on the operation of the excursions?
19. Is there, do you think, a hierarchy developing in terms of different types of guides?
20. In your opinion, how important is a tour guide in tourism industry?
21. Could your guide start work immediately after completing their training course?
22. How many tour guides do you have? How many are part time and full time guides?
23. Who is the best guide in your company and why is that?
24. What do you think are the key roles of tour guides?
25. Who should tour guides be responsible to?
26. What are major problems among your tour guides?
27. How do you punish you guides if they make mistakes?
28. What types of people make better guides?
29. What are comments about the Professional Guide Association of Thailand (PGAT)?
30. What do you think the quality of current tour guides compared to that of tour guides in the past?

**Figure 3 :**

**Interview with guides training organisers**

**c) Interview with guide training organisers:**

1. What is the backgrounds and philosophy of the training course?
2. What techniques do you use to attract the applicants?
3. What in your opinion is/are the competitive edge compared to other guide training establishments?
4. How many people apply to under the training course each year and what is the average number to be selected?
5. What is the selection process of guide candidates?
6. What is your criteria in selecting them?
7. In your opinion, can everybody be a tour guide, why/why not?
8. What types of people make better guides, why?
9. How do you agree with the saying goes “ a tour guide is an ambassador for the country ” ?
10. What do you think are the motivations for people to become a tour guide?
11. Some say that certain aspects are unteachable, like a sense of humour, caring attitude, leadership. How would you agree with this? Why?
12. Are there any particular kinds of people unsuitable to be tour guides?
13. What do you think are tour guide's roles?
14. To whom do you think tour guides are responsible?
15. How essential is formal guide training to make a guide professional?
16. Please tell me about the guide training course, fees and training period?
17. Apart from offering general/guiding knowledge, how much a practical work is emphasised?
18. How significant is a practical work in relation to general/guiding knowledge?
19. How are guide trainees examined?
20. Each year, how many guide applicants pass/fail the exam?
21. For those failed, are they given a chance to re-sit?
22. Regarding guide trainers/lecturers, please tell me how important they are/why?
23. How do you select guide trainers/lecturers?
24. What is the relationship between your training establishment and the government tourism body?
25. What are the problems in running guide training courses? How do you solve them?
26. Do you have any contacts with the Professional Guide Association, tour operators, apart from the government body? Are they supporting you in any way at all, if any?
27. What do you think are the key strengths and weaknesses of your guide training establishments?
28. How are you satisfied with the quality of your guide trainees, why?
29. Have you ever given any feedback from guide employers? What was it like?
30. How do you see your guide training courses for the next year?

**Figure 4 :**

**Interview with guides government tourism official**

**d)Interview with government tourism officials:**

1. What are your roles in relation to tour guide training?
2. What kind of supports, if any, are offered to guide training establishments?
3. In your view, how significant are tour guides in the tourism industry?
4. Are you happy with tour guides' quality at the present? Why/why not?
5. What is the criteria for establishing a guide training course?
6. What are the types and number of tour guides in the country now?
7. Please tell me the major constraints of producing quality guides?
8. How do you control the number of tour guides produced each year?
9. Who do you think should tour guides responsible to while guiding?
10. Regarding tour guides' code of conduct, do you experience any difficulties at all?  
How do you solve them?
11. How do you deal with illegal tour guides?
12. If tourists are mistreated or ill-treated by tour guides, what should they do?
13. Are there tourist police? If yes, what are their roles?
14. How would tourist police assist foreign tourists?
15. Could tourist police currently cope with tourist-related problems? Why/why not?
16. Can a foreign tour leader do a guiding job? Why/why not?
17. If tour leaders are not allowed to guide, how could they be punished?
18. Are all tour guides required to be registered? Why/why not?
19. What do you think about the guiding fees?
20. How can tour guides' standard and professionalism be raised?



**Figure 5 :**

**Interview with guides lecturers/trainers**

**e) Interview with guide lecturers/trainers:**

1. How long have you been a guide lecturer/trainer?
2. Apart from being a guide lecturer/trainer, what are you doing?
3. As a guide trainer/lecturer, how many places are you teaching right now?
4. How often do you teach a week? And how big is your class?
5. If possible, what size class would you prefer? Why?
6. Please tell me your specialised area of teaching/training ?
7. What are the constraints of teaching/training guide students?
8. What are your teaching/training approaches?
9. Would you agree that tour guides play a vital role in tourism industry? Why?
10. While guiding, who should guides be responsible to?
11. In your personal view, what makes better guides?
12. What kind of people should not become tour guides, why?
13. Can you teach guide trainees to have leadership, sense of humour, warmth and caring? Why/why not?
14. To what extent can guide trainees who lack self confidence be trained to become a good guide?
15. As a guide trainer, how important is a practical work compared to guiding and general knowledge?
16. What are the major elements contributing to being successful guides? Why?
17. Are you satisfied with the training course contents? Why/ why not?
18. In what areas do you think need to be improved? How?
19. From your teaching/training experience, what elements do you think are teachable/unteachable? Why so?
20. Does higher formal educational background contribute to better guiding performance, why/ why not?

**Figure 6 :**

**Interview with Professional guide association**

**f) Interview with Professional Guide Association:**

1. Please tell me briefly about the backgrounds and objectives of your association.
2. What are your roles in relations to tour guides, guide trainers/lecturers, guide training organisers, tour operators and government tourism body?
3. What is your view regarding tour guides' roles in the tourism industry?
4. To what extent are you satisfied with the quality of tour guides nowadays?
5. How many members do you have currently, and what is the criteria for the application?
6. Is it compulsory for all tour guides to be your members?
7. What benefits are being offered to your members?
8. What are the major problems arising in terms of tour guides' code of conduct?
9. If tour guides are being accused of cheating tourists, how would you handle the problem?
10. What is the current guiding fees? How is the guideline for guiding fees established?
11. In your opinion, how would you best raise the quality and standard of tour guides?
12. What do you think contribute to being a professional guide?
13. What make some people better guides than others?
14. To what extent do you think *acting* can enhance guiding performance?
15. What does the term *profession* mean to you?
16. How would you agree that formal training is essential to make a guide professional?
17. Do you think the higher formal education guide trainees have, the better? Why/why not?
18. What is your comment about the current guide training courses?
19. If your guide members are unfairly treated by parties concerned, how would you help them?
20. In case of misconduct behaviour, how would the tour guide be punished?
21. If guide employers pay guides according to their own criteria, how would you solve the problem?
22. In practice, how much do you think the association is recognised by the parties and individuals concerned?
23. Regarding guide training organisers, does the association have its representative as one of the training committees? If not, how would this affect the quality of training courses?
24. Has the association organised the guide training course? If yes, how? If not, why?
25. To what extent can guide trainees who lack self confidence be trained to become a good guide?
26. How important is a practical work compared to guiding and general knowledge?
27. What are the major elements contributing to being successful guides? Why?
28. Please tell me your past successful and present projects?
29. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your association?
30. How would you like to see the future role of your association?