

ASSESSING COMMUNICATION SKILLS AMONG EGYPTIAN TOURIST GUIDES: AMERICAN TOURISTS PERCEPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the communication skills to be available at Egyptian tourist guide and how American tourists assess these skills, as American tourists in Egypt are considered one of the most significant tourism markets in Egypt. This approach analyses the perception and satisfaction with the guided sightseeing tour of Egypt among the American participants. The purpose of this study is to assess communication skills among Egyptian tour guides: American tourist's perceptions. To achieve this purpose, it was used a descriptive research design - correlation and contrasts. The quantitative methods presented in the questionnaires was designed and distributed to a sample of American tourists in Cairo, Luxor and Aswan. This approach is based on different research methods as questionnaire, participant observation, collecting data; the final form of the main data collection contained 62 questions. A sample of 456 was selected. 451 usable responses were obtained. Questionnaires were collected every 12 weeks (three months). The Statistical Program for the Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyse the questionnaire organizing and analysing it which all of them assure the overall satisfaction of American tourists about the communication skills of their Egyptian tourist guides. The study mainly addressed how American tourists assess communication skills among Egyptian tourist guides. Results of this study will reveal if Egyptian tourist guides possess communication skills in different degrees to perform their tasks. The study also will show the need to improve the Knowledge and attitudes of the new generations of tourist guides.

KEYWORDS: American tourists, Assessment, Communication Skills, Egyptian tourist guide, Perception and Satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Communication skills are very vital for tourism industry. “That’s due to the developing internationalization of tourism and tour industry. Difficulties in communication between people of different cultures have long been of interest to scholars and practitioners interested of people across cultural boundaries. Communication skills between tourists and hosts from different cultures may result in positive as well as negative impacts, thus it is important to improve the ability of those working in the field of tourism to activate and enhance their communication skills and to translate it into effective performance with positive outcomes”.¹

The tour guide profession is considered one of the most important professions in the tourism sector. Tourist guide is one of the important pillars for the industry of tourism. He can make or break the tour.

The most important role of tourist guide is the cultural mediator (which is Closely related with tourist guide communication skills) because it is the key factor to all other roles and if this role was performed accurately and successfully all other roles will be performed as well, because the qualities and skills demanded to the role are almost those demanded to other roles.²

It is the duty of the tourist guide to achieve the expected satisfaction of tourists from the guided tours. It is generally accepted that the tourist guide is the one who sells the next tour.

The tourist guide should have verbal and non-verbal communication skills, Leadership skills, time and group management skills, presentation skills, Interpretation and interpersonal skills, customer service skills, problem-solving skills. There are also certain qualities demanded such as awareness of cross culture, knowledge about destination, their culture and the tourist culture as well. They should also have organizing ability, self-confidence and good sense of humour.³

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study lies on three platforms. The first platform is that the study helps to increase the level of satisfaction of the American

¹ Yvette Reisinger and Lindsay W Turner(2003), *Cross-Cultural Behaviour in Tourism*.pp.28-29

² Catherine J.Schmidt,the guided tour,(1979),pp.442-443

³ Cathy H. C. Hsu Andrew Chan, (2010), *tour guide performance and tourist satisfaction: A Study of the package tourism shanghai*, pp.33-35.

tourists in Egypt towards the Egyptian tourist guide. The second platform is the important role-played by tour guides in general, and the importance of the American market as American tourism in Egypt is considered to be one of the most significant tourism markets in Egypt.

The third platform is the communication skills that Egyptian tour guides must have and master from the perceptions of American tourists, and this topic is one of the important issues in tourism literature.

The research aims at illustrating the importance of tour guide profession as an essential element in the tourism industry, exploring the needs of tour guides.

QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

To achieve the main objective of this study as well as to address the specific objectives, the research is determined to answer the following questions

- 1- How is the performance of the Egyptian tourist guides perceived by American tourists?
- 2- What are the important attributes of tour guide that preferred by American tourists?
- 3- What are the bases of communication skills that Egyptian tourist guides perform with American tourists?
- 4- Is there a correlation between American tourists' satisfaction and communications skills that tour guides in Egypt possess?

LITERATURE REVIEW

AN OVERVIEW OF TOUR GUIDE PROFESSION

A tour guides play “an extremely important and diagnostic role on tourists’ remaining pleased with tour organization and travel experience ,tour guides shoulder big duties and responsibilities in the tourism industry. Not only does the work of a tour guide involve the transmission of information, but it also involves presenting it in an interesting manner”.⁴

⁴ Poudel, S. and Nayaupane, G. P. (2013), ‘The Role of Interpretative Tour Guiding in Sustainable Destination Management: A Comparison between Guided and Non guided Tourists’, pp.659-72.

TOUR GUIDE (DEFINITIONS, CHARACTERISTICS AND TYPES)

TOUR GUIDE DEFINITIONS

"A person who guides groups or individual visitors from abroad or from the home country around the monuments, sites and museums of a city or region;

To interpret in an inspiring and entertaining manner, in the language of the visitor's choice, the cultural and natural heritage and environment".⁵

According to the Oxford dictionary "the guide concept can be illustrated as guiding and showing routes, leading or directing others' way the definition of tour guide is expressed in many ways in the literature such as the person who is responsible for directing and leading tourists during their tour or sightseeing; the person who accompanies visitors, individual tourists or group of tourists during their holiday, interprets historical, cultural and natural sites in an entertaining way in the language of visitors, explains aspects of local culture and enables them to understand the value of this culture and creates favourable image of the destination the local citizen who interprets cultural and natural heritage sites for tourists and visitors in their own language, as well as being licensed by competent authorities to guide tourists for a fee, wage or salary."⁶

TOUR GUIDE CHARACTERISTICS

Primary characteristics "required for practicing the guiding profession can be illustrated as follows: presentation and communication skills, professional attitude, tolerant, fairness, well-groomed, gentle, humorous, friendly, helpful, outward-looking, instructor, translator, entertainer, providing accurate facts and information, problem-solving, pathfinder, salesperson, decision-maker, proficiency in foreign languages, comprehensive knowledge of the destination and of tourists' culture, full perspective of history and historic sites, to be commitment to continuous learning and personal enhancement, leading and organizing tourist

⁵ Ap and wong,(2001),innovation strategies and organizational culture in tourism.pp.551

⁶ Cetin and yarkan,(2017), the professional relationship between tour guides and tour operators,pp.33-45

groups, engaging the audience, speaking in a warm, audible, clear voice at a moderate pace, correct posture and eye contact, storytelling”.⁷

TOUR GUIDE TYPES

"Guides in Egypt can generally guide anywhere since we have solid knowledge of its rich history. In some countries, guides are strictly classified into driver guides, site guides or museum guides"

There are several types of tourist guides

- A local tourist guide “is a person whom 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 small region. A local tourist guide is also a person who gives information during a visit to a museum, monument or other sites at which he is based”.

- A national tourist guide is a person who gives information on culture, archaeology, history, religion, flora and fauna on the whole territory of his country.⁸

Adventure guides, “They include mountaineering guides, bicycle guides, fishing guides, and rafting guides. The work of an adventure guide develops from a serious devotion to a sport or activity”.

Urban guides, they are those who take pleasure in telling the story of a city or region. Some of them are step-on guides who stepped into a motor coach and conducting a small segment of a tour that is supervised by a tour manager.

Others work as a tour manager who meets the entire group upon its arrival in the city, helps in coordinating all attractions, meals and hotel check-ins and remains with the group until it departs. Throughout the tour, the guide is also expected to give extensive commentary on the region.⁹

ROLE OF THE TOUR GUIDE IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

The role of the tour guide is essential to the satisfaction and achievement of a deep experience for tourists. Ap and ‘Wong described the tour guide as a front-line player in the tourism industry. Especially in the context of cultural

⁷ Cohen, E. (1985). The tourist guide: The origins, structure and dynamics of a role, pp.5–29.

⁸ عبيد عاتى, أخلاقيات مهنة الإرشاد السياحي, (1433), ص.34-35

⁹Zenaida Lansangan-Cruz,(2008),Principles and Ethics of Tour Guiding,PP.3-5

heritage tourism which is the main tourism product in Egypt. The instrumental role includes: providing direction, access, security and safety, organizing, managing and controlling the group, having the right to choose what will be shown and what will not be shown; the interactional role includes: managing relationships between locals and tourists, experiencing different cultures that leads to understanding the local culture (*i.e.* cultural norms, customs, traditions...etc.) and experiencing the daily life of the host community; the social role includes: maintaining cohesion within the group and ensuring entertainment humour discipline and morale and finally the communicative role includes: providing information, knowledge and interpretation about different sites, aspects of the destination (orientation tours about the destination).¹⁰

PROFESSION OF TOUR GUIDES AND COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES

In the profession of Tour Guides, who are significant actors in presenting an attraction or a destination, the communicative aspect is significant. The knowledge of foreign languages, mastering of “the currently popular global discourse”, the knowledge of their mother tongue and “communication competencies”, are all-essential in enriching the experience of modern tourists, who are, in many respects, co-creators of their tourism experience.¹¹

THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNICATION

Barrett, Deborah J. stated that Communication is the transmission of which means from one individual to every other or too many people, whether or not verbally or nonverbally. “Communication from one man or woman to some other is frequently depicted as an easy triangle consisting of the sender, the message, and the receiver.”¹²

Communication is the riding pressure of the human being who is a social creature via introducing and speaking with different dwelling things. At the middle of communication, which is the capability of connecting humans with every other, is the manner of belonging, sharing and connecting. “Communication is a thought that constantly will increase its significance from previous to current due to the fact conversation is crucial in life. In the

¹⁰ Bayram, G., (2021): Tour Guides’ Roles and Responsibilities in a Community Based Tourism Approach, In: *The Routledge Handbook of Community Based Tourism Management: Concepts, Issues and Implications*, pp.225-237.

¹¹ Salazar, N. B. (2006). *Touristifying Tanzania: Local Guides, Global Discourse*. *Annals of Tourism Research*, pp. 833- 852.

¹² Barrett, Deborah J., (2006), *A Communication Approach for Senior-Level Managers*, pp.386-390.

identical way, the character transfers his/her ideas and emotions to the different character through communicating.¹³

WHY ARE COMMUNICATION SKILLS IMPORTANT?

Communication abilities need to be a crucial section of information training. The significance of Communication can be without problems misplaced in an enterprise that ought to entertain travellers whilst nevertheless defending the place in which they are journeying and make sure a secure experience.

The relation between Communication skills and tourist guide:

“Communication skills are the guarantee to the high quality services provided by the tourist guide to achieve the expected satisfaction of tourist, many researchers such as indicated three dimensions to measure the intercultural communication of the tourist guide which are knowledge, attitudes and skills translated into behaviour.¹⁴

One of the important elements contributing to the success of a tour program, as well as to the satisfaction of tourists, is the skill of the tour guide. “These studies further reported that unequal skill of tour guides influences the quality of tourism services in both small and big companies, when some of skilful tour guides leave their current companies to open their own businesses, they take their customers and management skills with them.¹⁵

DIFFERENT WAYS OF COMMUNICATING

Communication takes place in three different ways: verbal, non-verbal and written. During the daily encounters, individuals mostly communicate by verbal way of speaking. “When communication takes place with words, it is regarded as verbal. Although verbal or nonverbal communication is interdependent, nonverbal communication is used to support or change verbal communication”.¹⁶

“Verbal communication is a natural process due to the parallel development of sound and language since the existence of humanity”. Verbal

¹³ Collier, M.J. (1989) *Cultural and Intercultural Communication* Competence, pp. 287-302.

¹⁴ Mehrabian, A., and Wiener, M. (1967), "Decoding of Inconsistent Communication", pp-114.

¹⁵ Huang, S., Hsu, C.H.C. & Chan, A. (2010). *Tour Guide Performance and Tourist Satisfaction: A Study of the Package Tours in Shanghai*, pp.3-33.

¹⁶ Shidende, D., Kaijage, S., and Möbs, S., (2019): *Towards Enhancing Tour Guide professionalism in Tanzania through a Tour Guide Portal*, *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, pp.1-25.

communication is the most commonly used form of communication in every field of communication, in our daily relations, in professional fields and in diplomacy. “Nonverbal communication supports the real meaning of verbal communication, the perception of the meanings expressed by the words and what they tell. Nonverbal communication is a type of communication that is carried out only by body language movements without using a word.”¹⁷

Body language, which stands behind nonverbal communication, provides a clue in analysing characters as a personal signature; Good communication is the foundation of good relationships. In addition, good relationships are the way for building A-teams that will take your organization from good to great. “Good communication among the members of a team builds trust, resolves (and even prevents) problems, provides clarity and direction, improves productivity, and increases engagement”.¹⁸

TOUR GUIDES’ PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES

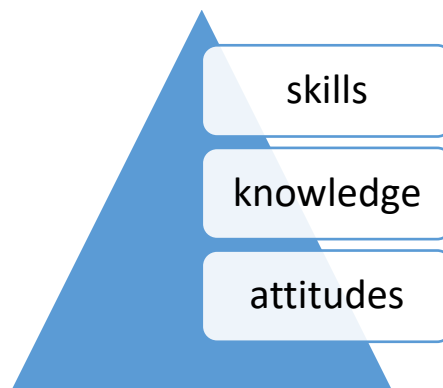


Figure (12): Tour guides’ professional competencies

Tour guides’ professional competencies are a mixed-up concept with various sorts of tourism related knowledge, skills and attitude. From acquisition of certificates to cultivation of professional competencies, tour guides must experience long-term learning and training. Such kind of specialty of tourism not only may result in and influence tour guides’ better and more efficient job performance and outcomes, but also can be measured by certain standard. Curtin “explained that tour guides’ professional

¹⁷ Prakash, M., Chowdhary, N. & Sunayana (2011). Tour guiding: Interpreting the challenges, pp.65-81.

¹⁸ Chen, C. and Chen, F. (2010), ‘Experience Quality, Perceived Value, Satisfaction and Behavioral Intention for Heritage Tourists’, pp.29-35.

competencies are based on trained and developed parts. It means professional knowledge; skill and attitude can be learned and cultivated”.¹⁹

METHODOLOGY

This study showed how the research was designed and carried out including the research instruments and sample selection, validity and reliability, data collection, data analysis, and response rate. The study used a descriptive-correlation research design. This chapter provided an overall view of the research methodology that includes quantitative approaches .

“Nassaji clarified that the purpose of a descriptive approach is to describe the phenomenon and its characteristics because it tries to describe what happened and then analyse the results quantitatively. The tools used to collect data usually are questionnaires. This study was intended to answer the set of research questions through quantitative means”.²⁰

Research approaches “are the plans and procedures for research that describes the steps from expectations to detailed methods of data collection, analysis and explanation are called research approaches”.²¹

In this approach, the researcher is trying to describe the subject of the study, analysis the data, compare, explain, and assess, hoping to reach meaningful generalizations to increase and enrich knowledge on the subject. Quantitative Approach: Walliman illustrated that quantitative approaches depended on analysing of data in the form of numbers and using mathematical operations to check their properties.²²

“The main purposes of quantitative analysis are the measurement, comparisons, testing of the hypotheses, examining the relationships, construction of the concepts, exploration, control, and explanation. In this concern, Nardi stated that, Quantitative approaches as a type of technique

¹⁹ Baum, T. (2002), ‘Skill And Training For The Hospitality Sector: A Review Of Issues’, *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, pp. 343-364.

²⁰ Nassaji, H. (2015). Qualitative and descriptive research: Data type versus data analysis.pp. 129-132.

²¹ Sutton, j., & Austin, Z. (2015): *Quantitative research: Data collection, analysis, and management*, pp.226.

²² Walliman, N. (2017). *Quantitative Data Analysis*. In *Research Methods*, pp. 148-166.

are usually in content analysis, social network analysis, and in-depth interviewing”.²³

Cronbach’s Alpha is one of the most frequently applied metrics to measure a scale’s reliability, in which its index ranges from 0.0 to 1.0. Researcher should target a value closer to 1.0, as Alpha value proves that the instrument of the study is strong and consistent. However, it is important to note that in social sciences the threshold value of 0.7 is considered acceptable

In order to measure the internal consistency and reliability of the study’s constructs. Cronbach’s alpha (α) measure was used. The scales’ reliabilities were measured and the Cronbach’s Alpha of all scales in Table (1) ranged from 0.786 to 0.984, and for total questionnaire items was (0.955), this indicate an acceptable Cronbach’s Alpha value for each field, whenever Cronbach’s Alpha value is acceptable if it's more than (0.7).

Table (2) Cronbach’s Alpha value

Section	Variables	No. of items	Cronbach’s Alpha Value	Validity Coefficient*
1-How important the following aspects of your tour guides’ performance were when you decided to take this trip	Characteristics of tour guides’ performance in terms of providing a good experience	9	0.817	0.904
	Communication Skills of Tour guides’ performance in terms of providing a good experience	8	0.786	0.887
	how satisfied you were with the following perceived of your tour guides’ performance on this trip	9	0.856	0.925
2-Tourguideperformance	Intrapersonal Servability and professional competence.	15	0.984	0.992
	Interpersonal Servability and Organizational skills	15	0.976	0.988
	Total	56	0.955	0.977

* Validity coefficient = $\sqrt{\text{Reliability coefficient}}$

²³ Nardi, P. M. (2018). Doing survey research: A guide to quantitative methods.

MAIN SURVEY

POPULATION AND SAMPLE SELECTION

In the first step, the population of the study was chosen . Population was defined as ‘the complete set of units of analysis that are under investigation, while element is the unit from which the necessary data is collected’. This research focuses on 451 American tourists to assess the communication skills of Egyptian tour guide: American tourists’ perceptions. The empirical study is conducted in Egypt in order to test the theoretical model. Therefore, the population of the study are American tourists who are/were traveling in a package tour in Egypt. The next step is to identify the sampling method to be used to select the sample for the study. According to the methodology literature, there are two main sampling methods, including probability and non-probability sampling

DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher depends on using The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to process data statistically. The treatment included the following statistical methods:

1. Cronbach's Alpha Test: To calculate the stability coefficients of the questionnaire, and the coefficient of stability of each axis of the study axes.
2. Percentage and frequency: To describe the characteristics of the study population of the functional variables, and to determine the responses of its members towards the study axes.
3. Means, and standard deviation (SD)
4. Pearson correlation.
5. Regression analysis

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter analyses and presents the findings and discussion of the quantitative data collected from questionnaires, which extracted after analysing the questionnaire.

SECTION ONE: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

As depicted in figure (14) shows the discussion of the research findings begins with a brief demographic profile of respondents in terms of gender, the majority of the respondents were male (52.20%), rather than female respondents (47.80%) of this sample.

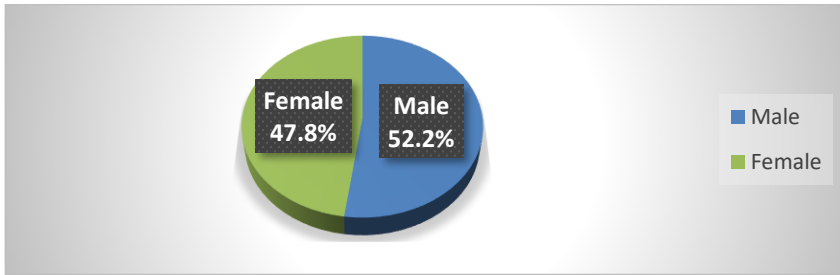


Figure (14): American tourists to EGYPT in terms of gender

As depicted in figure (17) shows the discussion of the research findings begins with a brief demographic profile of respondents in terms of the purpose of your trip. Regarding the purpose of their trip, about 96.90% mentioned that they were travelling for Vacation

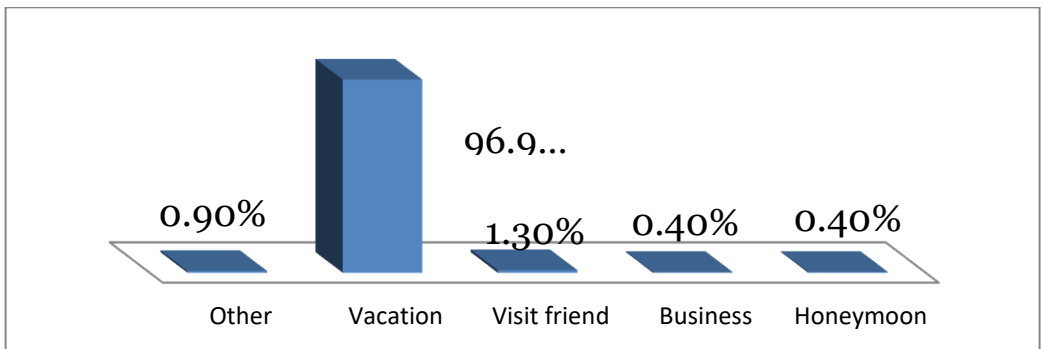


Figure (17): American tourists to Egypt in terms of purpose of trip

STUDY VARIABLES ANALYSIS

CHARACTERISTICS OF TOUR GUIDES’ PERFORMANCE IN TERMS OF PROVIDING A GOOD EXPERIENCE

Table (3): Descriptive analysis of Characteristics of tour guides’ performance in terms of providing a good experience

Table (3) presents the means and standard deviations of the Characteristics of tour guides’ performance in terms of providing a good experience, where the means ranged between (4.74 –4.88) compared with the total instrument mean for the domain (4.82). The item “Tour guide had professional skills in presentation” ranked first with a mean and standard deviation (Mean=4.88, standard deviation = 0.321) compared with the total instrument mean and the standard deviation. The item "Tour guide handled customer complaints well" ranked last reached a mean (4.74) and the standard deviation was (0.480) compared with the mean and standard deviation of the total instrument

Variables	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important	Mean	SD	Rank
1-Tour guide had professional skills in presentation	0	0	11.6	88.4	4.88	.321	1
2-Tour guide informed visitors about destination's customs	0.4	0.9	14.7	83.9	4.82	.438	6
3-Tour guide communicated well and he has language skills	0	0	17.4	82.6	4.83	.380	4
4-Tour guide handled customer complaints well	0.4	0.4	24.1	75	4.74	.480	9
5-Tour guide had knowledge of local people's lifestyle	0.4	0.2	18.5	80.8	4.79	.472	7
6-Tour guide had knowledge of tourist attractions	0	0	14.3	85.7	4.86	.350	2
7-Tour guide was able to solve problems	0.4	0.9	19.6	79	4.77	.500	8
8-Tour guide had generated a friendly atmosphere with group	0	0.9	15.2	83.9	4.83	.399	5
9-Tour guide respected tour members	0	0	15.2	84.8	4.85	.359	3
Total Mean	4.82						

Source: Developed for this research

- NOTE: No one sees these points raised for discussion as unimportant, but everyone sees them as extremely important.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF TOUR GUIDES’ PERFORMANCE IN TERMS OF PROVIDING A GOOD EXPERIENCE.

Table (4): Descriptive analysis of Communication Skills of Tour guides’ performance in terms of providing a good experience

Variables	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important	Mean	SD	Rank
1-Tour guides had good presentation skills	0	0	12.1	87.9	4.88	.326	1
2-Tour guides written communication were the transmission of emotions, thoughts, wishes and events in an effective way in writing	0	1.3	44.6	54	4.53	.526	6
3-Tour Guides involvement in the presentation of an object (which stands for an attraction) increased the perception of beauty of a certain object when observed by tourists.	0.4	0.4	61.2	37.9	4.37	.518	7
4-Tour guides had the moving activity during the observation of the object (which stands for an attraction) increased the perception of beauty	0.4	0.4	60.3	38.8	4.37	.520	8
5-Tour guides had the knowledge of languages, was very important in the profession of Guides	0	0.4	45.4	54	4.54	.508	5
6-Tour guides were good at communication(verbal-nonverbal and written)	0	0	31.3	68.8	4.69	.464	4

7-Tour guides' body language had played a very important role in communication.	0	0	28.1	71.9	4.72	.450	2
8-Tour guides' verbal and non-verbal communications played a good role to provide more satisfaction to customers.	0	0.4	26.8	72.8	4.72	.458	3
Total Mean					4.60		

➤ NOTE: No one sees these points raised for discussion as unimportant, but everyone sees them as extremely important.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study includes the conclusions of theoretical studies. The study contributes to understanding and providing more detailed information about assessing a communications skill among Egyptian tourist guides and American tourists' perceptions, this study consists of the general results, the results of the study, its recommendations, and the determinants of the study.

The measures of four main constructs of the study, including intrapersonal servability of tour guide, interpersonal servability and organizational skills of tour guide. This chapter, moreover, described the statistical methods employed for data analysis, including validity and reliability assessments, normality distributions. "The purpose of this thesis is to Assessing communication skills among Egyptian tour guides: American tourists' perceptions, to achieve this purpose, it was used a descriptive research design - correlation and contrasts. The quantitative methods presented in the questionnaires was designed and distributed to a sample of American tourists".

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

Based on the results reported in this study, the study suggested the following recommendations:

There is need to new courses of communication and interpersonal skills at the departments of tourist guidance.

There is need to organize training programs and to organize qualification courses for the old and new tour guides in Egypt and these must be

mandatory for all working in the tourism field. These are to keep abreast with the new developments in the different sectors.

More control at the number of graduates of tourist guidance department should be made.

The high level of education quality in the field of tour guiding will make a significant contribution to their professional life.

More practical training to the students of tourist guidance department is highly recommended.

Rising salaries of the tourist guides to improve their social level and to encourage them to reduce their commissions

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