

## Touring the Worthiness of Tourist Guides in Malaysia Today

Mimi Sofiah Ahmad Mustafa

Law Department, Universiti Teknologi MARA Melaka Branch, Malaysia

Ezwani Azmi

Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Melaka Branch,  
Malaysia

Yuhanza Othman, Marziana Abd Malib, Ida Rahayu Mahat

Law Department, Universiti Teknologi MARA Melaka Branch, Malaysia

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### Abstract

Tourist guides are one of the front-liners that undisputedly ascertain the success of any tourism activities conducted by the tourism enterprise. The touring activity would be more fruitful and enjoyable with the existence of a tourist guide. The law requires that any transportation of more than seven persons that has an element of tourism be escorted with a licensed tourist guide (requirement by MOTAC, enforceable in August 2014). However, this is rarely the case today as there is lacking in the demand for tourist guides even before the COVID-19 period. The development in information technologies causing difficulties to tourist guide to get assignments to continue their tour guiding jobs. They have to compete with online virtual information providers that could easily be available anywhere in the world. Thus, this paper would discover the relevance of tourist guide during this era by exploring the problems faced by a tourist guide in the tourism industry and suggest several solutions to the issues encountered by tourist guides in the execution of their job. A qualitative method was adopted in this study where several tourist guides and tourists were interviewed. This study found that tourist guides are still significant and relevant, some problems faced the current tourist guides. Several suggestions were proposed so that tourist guides could maintain their importance in the industry. The writers interviewed several tourist guides for the purpose of this writing via telephone calls, face to face meeting and in-depth written interviews. It is hoped that the outcome of this writing will help the legislature, policy makers and those involved in the tourism industry to bear in mind the role of tourist guides in their decision making.

**Keywords:** Tourism Industry, Tourist Guides, Issues, Relevance, Legislation.

## Introduction

In one of the family trips of one of the authors of this paper, an infant of two years old stopped crying on a bus to a tourist destination after the tourist guide started singing the popular *Upin Ipin* (a bestselling children programme in Malaysia) song with a complete package of its dancing gestures. On another trip to a neighbouring country, the tourist guide was a joyful friendly chap, Pak Aldi Doank, who succeeded to distract us from feeling anxious because the route was so bumpy with a lot of sharp turns. He just recited some poems and wanted us to “buy” (respond to) the *pantun* (poems) and all of us ended up laughing at each other’s masterpieces! We were so grateful for having made our acquaintance with Pak Aldi who is now a well-known tourist guide in one of the many regions in Indonesia.

The World Federation on Tourist Guides Association indicates that a tourist guide is, “... a person who guides visitors in the language of their choice and interprets the cultural and natural heritage of an area which person normally possesses an area-specific qualification usually issued and/or recognised by the appropriate authority...”.

Having a job as a tourist guide could be someone’s dream job (Birch, 1989) and (Pond, 1993) because one can travel around the world and see places. In the travel industry, according to Mancini (2001), a tour guide is a person who takes people on sightseeing tours of limited duration. Generally, we can associate the job specifications of a tourist guide as something exciting and adventurous that have the package of being resourceful, knowledgeable and memorable. Not to mention that a tourist guide is a huge contributor of the success of any state tourism industry today. According to Weller and Xu (2007), tourist guides have important roles as a mediator or a cultural broker to help enhanced travel experiences of Chinese tourists in Australia. Geva and Goldman (1991) believed that tour guides are responsible for the sale of the following tour. Schmidt (1979); Pearce (1982) mentioned that tourist guides can perform the role of buffering among tourists, the social environment, arranging transportation, interpreting, handling problems, guarding travellers from difficulties, and making the environment safe for tourists because they act as “intermediaries” between tourists and the ‘unknown’ environment. Not to mention the fact that what is communicated by tourist guides to tour groups could increase both group morale and social interaction - Ryan and Dewar (1995). Lastly, it is worth mentioning that Schmidt (1979) also mentioned that a tourist not only views the local sights from a coach, but also interprets the sights through the tour guide’s commentary.

Mak et al (2011) mentioned in their research that “...*The tour guiding profession has been the “Cinderella” of the tourism industry: attractive, useful, but often neglected...*”. Having stated that, it is of our concern that tourist guides are probably facing some difficulties to perform their jobs well in Malaysia today. We believe that there are several factors that could be said to be contributing to these so called issues clouding the career path of a tourist guide, making it seems unfamiliar and no longer the priority in the tourism industry. It should be again reminded that tourist guides are definitely little ambassadors for any countries in the world because they reflect, among others, enthusiasm, knowledge, perseverance and sacrifice to ensure their job would contribute to the state economy and well-being of everyone involved in the industry.

The statistics from the Malaysian Ministry of Tourism Art and Culture (MOTAC) show that the total number of registered tourist guides has increased from 15,701 people in April 2019 to 17,003 people in June 2020. The difference is quite obvious reflecting that there is a demand in tourist guides in Malaysia. However, there are still complaints from tourist guides that they are having difficulties to get assignments to continue their tour guiding jobs. It could

also be considered as a problem when there are more registered tourist guides and the number of tourists had folded by 4.8% pre COVID-19 period (Jan-May 2019) compared to the year 2018 according to the statistics from MOTAC but then again, tourist guides found that they are competing with online virtual information providers that could easily be available anywhere in the world.

It is thus the purpose of this writing to suggest several solutions to the issues encountered by tourist guides in the execution of their job. In so doing, we hope that the objectives of this writing are achieved where we aim to discover the problems faced by a tourist guide in the tourism industry and to explore the relevance of a tourist guide today. Amendments made to the existing laws relating to tourist guides seems desirable because an enforceable piece of law could legally ensure one's rights are protected and one's duties are carried out.

### **Materials and Methods**

The research objectives of this paper are to discover the problems faced by a tourist guide in the tourism industry, to explore the relevance of a tourist guide today and finally, to suggest several solutions to the issues encountered by tourist guides in the execution of their job. To achieve these objectives, the qualitative method was adopted where data were collected through interviews. This study applied the non-probability sampling where the samples were selected through purposive and judgmental sampling. Data collection involved semi-structured questions written interviews distributed to 18 tourist guides, 167 tourists and 16 travel agencies of which those responded ageing from 20 years old to above 55 years old guides in several states in Malaysia namely Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Terengganu. Considering the pandemic of Covid-19 that requires people to stay at home to avoid it from spreading, data were collected through telephone calls to some tourist guides and travel agencies, using the google form, WhatsApp and personal messages. Apart from this, the secondary data were in the form of descriptions from online published journals, online bulletins and textbooks.

### **Problems/Issues Relating to the job of Tourist Guides**

Like any other careers, tourist guides face difficulties in their jobs too. It is not surprising considering that they are dealing with human beings i.e. tourists who come from local and abroad with a lot of different languages and different cultures; not to mention different life principles and ideologies! These facts will help us to understand why it is necessary to legally assist the tourist guides so that they could continue to assist the Malaysian economy and tourism industry. It should be noted that most of the information mentioned below were gathered from interviews made with tourist guides in several states in Malaysia namely Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Terengganu. References are made to each tourist guide as TG1-TG18 totalling to eighteen tourist guides altogether.

#### **1. Payment Issue**

In Malaysia the payment for the job done by tourist guides is not standardised. Most tourist guides get paid based on commissions and these commissions are not fixed because they are based on the amount that is ascertained by the tour operators who hire the tourist guides. In an article extracted from LIBUR (2018), a tourist guide can be paid a minimum of RM200 per day, not inclusive of any other perks from any other side income that could be obtained from

the status of being the tourist guide. Although this fact could be advantageous for tourist guides, it is quite challenging for them. One reason being that the perks they are getting could be the activity of having to sell products to tourists which they bring to outlets that have been identified by tour operators who may have agreed with the owners. The tourist guide would only be given the commission if a certain amount of sales is achieved. This is so demotivating and frustrating for them as they end up selling products instead of introducing tour attractions. Mak et al (2011) exposed in their writing that the pressure placed on tourist guides was getting tougher as they were subject to shopping quotas and this exploitative measures had caused injustice to the tourist guides who probably had no choice but to succumb to what the tour operators had planned for them.

In addition to the above, the payment made to tourist guides more often than not is incompatible with the job done. According to TG1, sometimes a tourist guide is instructed to act as a tour leader in a tour. A tour leader has a much extended scope of duty in comparison to a tourist guide where the former is responsible to book tickets, accommodation and food, plan for touring activities or sightseeing destinations and any other matters related to the tour package. Thus, it is clearly unfair for tourist guides to be paid for unrelated jobs not within their professional skills and trainings. Even worse, if they have to undertake the job at the very last minute. TG14 admitted that they had to work for long hours between 10-24 hours a day and sometimes the tour itineraries were changed at the last minute.

TG14 mentioned that there is no guideline with regards to the rate of payment that a tourist guide would get. TG8 concurred stating that if there were any guideline, it needs to be revised. TG14 declared that Singapore has such guideline which makes it clearer and more certain as to how much a tourist guide is entitled to in any of the jobs that he/she has completed. TG18, an experienced tourist guide for 40 years, opined that this indefinite amount of payment for the service done by a tourist guide in Malaysia has long caused uncertainties and difficulties because the rate is not written in black and white and disputes could easily occur which inevitably leads to tourist guides being at the losing side because they are not the ones who are hiring. To add, not all the tourist guides are permanent staff of the tour operators, many of them are freelance guides which makes it more difficult if the payment rate is not made in writing.

## **2. Competitors**

Being in an industry where information regarding tour destinations is always expected to be at the finger tips, tourist guides are vulnerable to be in competition with several parties who are not registered tourist guides but could spare and share information to tourists faster and perhaps better than they do. The followings are some instances.

### *City Guide Competitors*

Some destinations where tourists go, the management provides their own staff to illustrate historical and interesting facts relating to those tourist attractions. For example, a museum has its own in-house staff to convey information regarding what is displayed inside the museum. However, this knowledge passing by the museum staff does not stop within the museum because the tourists are sometimes offered to be accompanied by the museum staff outside the vicinity of the museum as well. This has directly caused the service of tourist guides to become redundant and pointless. According to TG1, tourist guides have to search for information before any assignment and this effort would seem in vain if there are other parties who take over the job as tourist guides and leave them jobless. TG1 mentioned that it

would be helpful if the parties concerned could just share the workload with tourist guides because walking tour can be a handsome source of income for them.

### *Nature Guide Competitors*

Another example of competition amongst tourist guides is the Malim Gunung (Mountain Guides). These are local people who live in the mountains in the remote tourist attraction areas. They usually accompany the tourists to the mountains to explore the natural beauty of such destinations can offer. This apparently has driven registered nature tourist guides away since tourists generally would prefer the local people to bring them around. The reason is obvious as the Malim Gunung know better about the place as they grew up in the area. They can accurately portray the historical facts and culture about any one of the place. Besides, they can convincingly describe any folklores in the area. In addition, TG1 revealed that the Malim Gunung apparently have their own registered society but they are not registered tourist guides. The so called Malaysian Mountain Guides Association (MMGA) is a society registered under the Department of Registry of Society Malaysia (Jabatan Pendaftaran Pertubuhan Malaysia). Most of its members are located at East Malaysia covering mountains that are gazetted as tourist spots for climbers all over the world. As mentioned earlier, these Malim Gunung are not registered tourist guides and they do not have to go through courses required by the law to be regarded as Malim Gunung like the tourist guides do. This fact could be a losing side for the tourist guides as they need to go undergo a series of classes and courses plus examinations in order to be qualified as licensed tourist guides as compared to the Malim Gunung. It is not disputed that the selection of one Malim Gunung is probably tough and vigorous, but it should not be separated from the one that has been prepared by MOTAC for tourist guides.

### *Overseas Tourist Guides*

The regulation in Malaysia concerning overseas tourist guides who accompany tourists from their countries into Malaysia is quite loose and needs some amendments and serious enforcement by the authority. This “allowance” for overseas tourist guides to be available in the local conveyances carrying overseas tourists and explaining to the latter of Malaysian history and culture sounds a little bit odd and perhaps awkward. Unquestionably, this has damaging and undesirable impact to the Malaysian tourism industry generally and specifically to the tourist guides in Malaysia. By contrast, the Thailand and Singapore rules are stricter with regard to this matter. TG14 disclosed that the enforcement authorities in both Singapore and Thailand are more stringent where the authorities are aggressive in curbing external tourist guides who enter the countries to accompany tourists from their own countries. Those who violate the countries’ regulations could be fined and given warning letters not to repeat the offence again. According to TG14, no tourist busses or other tourist conveyances from Malaysia are allowed to enter into Thailand. On arrival at the national borders, all tourists must use the services provided by the Thais with respect to everything related to their stay in Thailand guided by their own tour guides. By contrast, we do have busses or vans bearing Thailand plate numbers in Malaysia carrying tourists from Thailand. Some of the tourists even arrive in Malaysia via air and the conveyances have been seen to fetch the tourists from the Malaysian international airports. This alarming flaw seems discriminatory in one sense and needs to be addressed accordingly.

### *Virtual Tourism*

By comparison, this type of competitor is probably the most competitive among all the above mentioned tourist guides. Virtual tourism in its simplest meaning is a tourism involving gadgets from the most basic ones like watching videos of tourism destinations to the most sophisticated ones involving simulators and headsets displaying tourist destinations anywhere in the world (Stainton, 2020). Stainton further described that it may include the use of different props where users may be expected to wear gloves; and there may also be additional stimuli such as movement (like in a roller coaster simulator), feeling (for example, when the user is sprayed with water) and scent. Some of the justifications of having virtual tourism include that for marketing and promotion purposes where prospective tourists can have virtual reality experiences to their chosen destinations and that it could attract them to decide. Next, to enhance tourism experience where tourists may virtually experience something that they would probably not keen to be involved in such as a roller coaster ride, deep sea diving or even bungee jumping. Another reason being the fact that some holidays are too expensive to be afforded by some people, hence the virtual tourism. TG1 did enlighten in one of her trips with some Chinese tourists in one of the tourist destinations in Malaysia where the tourism provider prepared checkpoints for tourists to take videos and photos so they could send to their families in China who could not afford to go for vacations to Malaysia. TG1 described that the facility available at the tourist spot could directly fetter the function of a tourist guide because prospective tourists could easily gather information from the videos captured during the visit and shared with their families at home. To add to justifications why virtual tourism is on the rise today is the fact that tourists are able to visit places of the past that are probably no longer in existence to make way for modernisation, or places which are inaccessible or places which are actually not in existence! All these are possible to be made available with the assistance of great technological tools. Even though the virtual tourism seems “too good to be true” but ironically, it actually exists and can cause tourism industry to accept the reality of a depleted function of a tourist guide.

### *Different Information for Historical and other Facts*

TG1 mentioned in the interview carried out that another difficulty faced by tourist guides includes the information getting process itself. Many tourist guides encounter different information for some of the things they search for the purpose of preparing their job. For example, one source of information states facts on a legendary icon *Mahsuri* (a woman who was defamed and later murdered but before she died she apparently cursed the people staying on the island of Langkawi for seven generations) in several versions. Discrepancies in information is essentially fatal for everyone because it could lead to misinformation. Misinformation is described here as objectively false information which is presented as true (and plausible enough to be initially believed by some) but is subsequently found to be incorrect (Johnson & Seifert, 1994; Wilkes & Leatherbarrow, 1988). Where tourism industry is concerned, information is as vital as one’s life! Imagine being in a place where you rely on information around you to actually survive a day and not getting the correct information from the sources around you. For example, Morgan et al (2013) disclosed in their writing that results from misinformation studies indicate that exposure to misinformation may contribute to distortions of memory. Cook et.al (2017) mentioned that climate misinformation could actually affect the administration of a government in the sense that public misconceptions about climate change can contribute to reduced recognition of the facts of climate change and reduced support for mitigation policies. Therefore, it can be argued that sources of

information available for tourist guides in Malaysia could have huge impact on the quality of job done by them because the information are probably not up-to-date or generated from false sources from parties who may wish to profit from the situation.

### 3. Illegal Tourist Guides

Unlicensed tourist guides are a major setback for both the tourist guides and the tour operators (Cetin & Yarqan, 2017). The same issue exists in Malaysia whereby most of the tourist guides interviewed expressed their concern over this matter. TG6 admitted that there are many programmes and events involving tourists in Malaysia that hire non-licensed tourist guides either virtually or live events. This actually jeopardises the position of licensed tourist guides in many ways who had spent a considerable amount of money to acquire the licence.

TG18 opined that it is not so difficult to become a tourist guide if one already is talented and well versed in the history and culture of any locality. The ability to speak fluently in a charming and joyful way is good enough to attract the tourists' attention to be participative in any one trip. Since tour guiding can be regarded as seasonal and to many tourist guides it is a part time freelance job, nothing is secured, be it the payment or even the job itself. According to Ap & Wong (2001), they rely on the goodwill of other stakeholders, such as tour operators and government agencies, to solve the problems they face in the performance of their profession. This means the tourist guides are unable to control their profession in the future. Although their role in the tourism industry is rather obvious and could easily be accepted as mini ambassadors of any countries in the world, there is no recognition for them by the travel industry (Cetin & Yarqan, 2017). TG18 further disclosed that it also all pipes down to the enforcement issue. Previously, there were SPAD (Land Public Transport Agency) and MOTAC helping out with the enforcement tasks. Today, these two agencies barely help out because of lack of staff. Thus, lack of enforcement is undoubtedly a major factor for the existence or if not, the increase in the number of illegal tourist guides. This is obvious because enforcement ensures people abide by rules and regulations. Lacking of this would inevitably cause people to feel "safe" to act as illegal tourist guides. Hence, this paper is proposing for some legal recognition for the licensed tourist guides who have gone through various trainings to be recognised as a licensed tourist guide. A legal recognition for a legal tourist guide should be able to heighten the status of any tourist guide in Malaysia.

### 4. Miscellaneous Issues

According to the interview conducted with TG18, courses for tourist guides are conducted by the private sector but they failed to update the law. This causes unnecessary hiccups in the jobs carried out by tourist guides in this country. Several anticipated consequences could occur such as delays in trips, arguments with tourists for prices to be paid for entry tickets etc., booking cancellations, unskilled tourist guides and others.

TG18 shared that some Malay tourist guides who could speak Mandarin were not given the opportunity to bring Chinese tourists around however those non Malay guides that could fluently speak Malay were at the advantage because they could smoothly address anything with parties where the tourists were brought to. This needless fact is not welcomed by many tourist guides who felt that their rights have been infringed albeit their competency to speak more than one language which must be seen as an additional flair to the tourism industry. Stein-Smith (2017) mentioned in her article that "*...Foreign language skills, bilingualism, and multilingualism, bring benefits to the individual in personal and professional life, and to society in terms of global talent and global citizenship...*" She further stated that

knowledge of more than one language is considered an advantage in a globalised world, and the term bilingual advantage is frequently used to refer to a group of cognitive advantages enjoyed by students (people) who speak more than one language. Thus, it is quite frustrating that Malaysian tourist guides are discriminated based on this fact. If it is not too much to say, it could be identified as racism!

### **The Existing Law on Tourist Guides in Malaysia**

In Malaysia, there is no special parliamentary legislation that particularly focuses on tourist guides but such a provision is shared with tourism enterprises and licensing matters under the Tourism Industry Act 1992 (Act). This Act was gazetted on 20<sup>th</sup> February 1992 that mainly focuses on the licensing and regulations of tourism enterprises and any matters related to it.

According to section 2 of the Act, a tourist guide is a person who is paid by remuneration to provide service to the tourists by guiding them with anything related to tours. Section 21 of the Act imposes a mandatory requirement on every tourist guide to apply for a licence to legally practise their services and further explains that a person shall be regarded as committing an offence if he/she fails to comply with section 21 where the penalty is either a fine not exceeding seven thousand ringgit or an imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years or both. Before the application for a license is approved, the tour guide needs to undergo a course of training and should pass the test of proficiency for tourist guides that shall be conducted by the Commissioner of Tourism. The Commissioner may also take into consideration the character, the qualification and the experience of a person in tour activities before granting the relevant license to any tour guides. Section 24 of the Act appends that, upon payment of a prescribed fee, the Commissioner shall grant a license to a tour guide and the name of that tour guide will be registered where the authorisation card will later be issued.

The Tourism Act does not expressly provide the rights and duties of the tour guide. Therefore, any rules and regulations that have been stipulated by MOTAC or any related agency will be considered as applicable and binding on all tour guides. Notwithstanding this, the Act imposes on each of a tour guide to wear the authorization card while he or she is on duty conducting any tour to any tourist and when he/she attending any related course and this authorization card cannot be worn by any unregistered tour guide (section 26 of the Act). In addition to this, section 27 provides that a tour guide needs to attend further training courses and pass further tests if required by the Commissioner. They shall also wear a standard form of dress and need to comply with a standard code of ethics prescribed by the Commissioner. The Tourism Act is silent concerning the code of ethics of tour guides and therefore could be referred to any rules or subsidiary legislations that are relevant to them. Furthermore, the Commissioner has a right to refuse in granting a license to anyone applying such a license and shall notify in writing of his refusal. The validity of the license is for three years and this license shall be renewed before the expiry date of the license as provided in the guidelines for license renewal by MOTAC.

Section 28 further provides for the suspension or revocation of license in the event of any tour guides making any misrepresentation on any fact that should have been disclosed to the Commissioner; failure to attend or complete the courses of training or any of the proficiency tests; failure to wear the authorisation card while on duty or acted in contravention of the rules of the Act. Once the license has been suspended or revoked, the tour guide will cease to act as a tour guide.



### Finding and Discussions

Many of the respondents interviewed by the writers, whether tourists, the tourist guides and the travel agencies themselves believed that the role of the tourist guides is significant to the tourism industry today. We managed to get 167 tourists to answer our online surveys where seventy-nine percent (132 people) of them were females and the balance of thirty-five tourists were male. Most of the tourists were youngsters between the age of 18-25 years old (131 respondents) and the least came from one under 18-year-old tourist. Others include age range of 26-30 years old (8 people), 31-35 years old (5 people), 36-40 years old (3 persons), 41-45 years old (2 persons), 46-50 years old (1 person), 51-55 years old (12 people) and above 55 years old (4 people).

About 132 respondents agreed that the service of tourist guides is still relevant today whereas 30 people were unsure and only 4 persons did not feel that the service could be of any use today. When asked as to the justifications for their answers, several responses could be categorised in the same groupings.

Almost all respondents who affirmed the need to have tourist guides for their vacation (from the one hundred and thirty-two respondents who said yes) justified that the guides had made their previous vacations easier and smooth sailing with almost zero glitches. Some of them upheld that the tourist guides handled everything from A to Z. To add, certain tourist attractions provide fast track admissions for tourists with guides. Moreover, local knowledge may be useful instead of just reading from the internet/guide book. Their trip became more meaningful when it was easier to engage with the surrounding especially the tourist guides were knowledgeable and knew the best places to visit. It was also intriguing to listen to the historical and culture descriptions of the places rather than having to read about them on the internet. Several respondents disclosed they could also feel the patriotic spirit the tourist guides embedded in them whilst depicting the historical events the destination offered. Those creative ones had the tourists even imagined they were in battles where the locals had to endure in search for freedom and rights. Many respondents also commented that tourist guides had made their trips memorable. On a serious note, one tourist averred that “...tour guides are among the most influential front-line actors in the tourism industry. Other than providing commentaries and an experience to tourists, the tourist guides are ambassadors and a conduit of information between the government and the people as well as potential foreign investors...”.

Several responses displayed that security was one of the concerns of the tourists and having tourist guides to tag along in places that they were unfamiliar with was a relief and definitely alleviated their spirit to explore the destinations with positive attitude. Such a feeling helped the tourists to develop a sense of trust between them and the tourist guides especially when it involves elderly tourists who would probably rely upon the tourist guides to guarantee their safety and guidance. The elderly had also described that they were not so skilful in using gadgets and the presence of tourist guides had relieved them with the pain of having to stare at their gadgets unknowingly. This certainly prompted a two-way communication which is preferred by tourist guides in discharging their duty as tourist guides where questions from tourists demonstrates the level of their interest in the tourist spot visited.

Having stated communication in the above paragraph, about twenty-five of the respondents mentioned that tourist guides minimised communication problems they faced whilst on vacation. Those aged 50 years old and above, sixteen of the total respondents, seemed to agree that tourist guides facilitated them in deciding and choosing food,

accommodation, tourist spots, souvenirs, transportations, activities and lots more. One respondent declared that she even had the opportunity to learn a new language from the tourist guide that accompanied her family and her on one vacation. The fact that tourist guides spend several days together with tourists would undoubtedly make this language learning possible, especially when it is learned in a casual and fun way.

From the perspective of the travel agencies, the survey was carried out in the state of Melaka only and 16 travel agencies took part where 66.7% believed that the service of tourist guides are still relevant today. The balance answered "maybe" (33.3%) instead of "no". This goes to show that where Melaka is concerned, tourist guides still are the essential part of tourism activities and many gave the same reasons as the respondents who were tourists and tourist guides above.

### **Suggestions and Conclusion**

Having discovered and analysed all the above information from all the respondents who took part in the survey and also from interviews carried out with the respective parties, it can be proposed that Malaysia must amend its existing laws on tourist guides to safeguard their rights and underline their responsibilities in carrying out their tasks. The amendment could be in the form of a regulation or a subsidiary legislation entitled the "Tourist Guides Regulation" and every single ruling concerning tourist guides should be enacted in that particular regulation. Such a regulation will definitely clarify a lot of ambiguities when it comes to the rights and responsibilities of tourist guides. For instance, matters such as course fees, commission rates, categories of tourist guides, appointment terms, offences that they could possibly cause, the penalties for such violations, the formation for a tribunal for tourist guides and others. Needless to say, their rights must evidently be provided for in the proposed regulation. The regulation must also visibly identify what type of actions can the tourist guides engage in the event of their rights being infringed by other parties. All relevant schedules and tables relating to their job specifications must also be attached in the appendices of the proposed regulation.

One of probably the most important things to determine with regard to tourist guides is the fixing of their rate of payment. As can be seen from the above discussions, this is not fixed in all states in Malaysia. Different states have different rates for the service of tourist guides. This could be embarrassing in one aspect because some of the tasks carried out by all of them in all states are practically the same. In actual fact, TG14 disclosed that there were several tourist guides who had to face last minute change of itineraries and ended up being a guide for than ten hours a day. A fixed rate for all job done by these tourist guides depending on their categories and job scope would be very welcoming and accepted with an open heart. A lot of doubts and uncertainties as to what they are going to receive as their income at any particular time could noticeably be minimised. The proposed fixed rate should demonstrate the calculation taking into account all considerations and details regarding the jobs carried out by the tourist guides. Factors that could probably be taken into attention are destinations, number of tourists in charged, age and gender of tourists, from where the tourists come, tourists with special needs, background and experience of the tourist guides and others. This would definitely reflect transparency in all aspects of a tourist guide's honest life to guide tourists under his/her charge. It is thus proposed in this writing that there should be a system to determine the rate based on the information keyed in before any job is carried out by the tourist guides.

Enforcement seems to be a constant and endless issue that entails nothing but aggressive understanding from the authorities concerned. Several tourist guides expressed their worries that their plights would be unresolved if the respective authorities do not play their roles as stipulated by the law. Almost all tourist guides who responded in the survey testified that the enforcement authority needs significant shifts in their strategy to ensure the tourist guides could be protected from various parties that could endanger their profession. Parties like illegal tourist guides or unlawful tour operators that gang up to reduce their opportunity to earn a decent income by abiding to the requirement of the law. Hence, it is proposed that a specific body must be established by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia which can handle cases such as the illegal appointment of a tourist guide, unfair rates for tourist guides or organisations that have in-house “tourist guides”. Such a body can act both as the tourism police or a tourism tribunal to solve problems related to tourism in general and tourist guides specifically. This proposed enforcement body must indicate that their main role is to ensure that the law is upheld. Therefore, the law must be well versed by all the officers in this proposed body. In order for them to do that, the law must first be enacted with clear and unambiguous provisions in all aspects to avoid unnecessary wastage of human consumption and taxpayers’ money. One suggestion given by one of the respondents is to follow what the Terengganu Tourism Department is doing. TG18 was referring to a situation where there is no tourist guide on an excursion bus coming to Terengganu. What the Terengganu Tourism Department would do is they will provide a tourist guide on that bus by making some calls for a tourist guide to be available for duty. This is the kind of enforcement that we need to be applied to all states in order to ensure the survival of the service of tourist guides in Malaysia. In addition, TG15 suggested that operations for checking up excursion buses should be heightened and regularly done like what Singapore and Thailand have been doing.

Another suggestion is for our education system to take seriously tourism aspects to be embedded in our education curriculum. It was proposed by two of the respondents (TG5 and TG18) that schools and higher learning institutions must include educational trips to famous locations in Malaysia where history could be learned hands-on to be delivered by tourist guides on buses. This will undoubtedly make the learning process more fun and interesting because students can ask questions relating to the places they are visiting while sight-seeing the places on the bus. On that note, one respondent gave an example of Singaporeans who make it compulsory for their students to learn the history of Melaka before going on a school trip to Melaka. This could be a valuable tip for us to pursue to make educational trips more beneficial and meaningful.

Finally, it is proposed that the cost of taking the tourist guide course to obtain the licence should be reduced. Several respondents (TG1, TG5, TG7, TG11 and TG14) mentioned that the course is quite expensive and imposes unwarranted burden to many of prospective tourist guides who wish to make it a career out of it. The reduction in the cost to attend the relevant courses would attract more to acquire the licence whether full time or as a part timer. Such a relief would enhance the quality of our tourist guides because more relevant courses parallel with the current needs such as modern digital technologies courses are possible to be attended by the guides. TG14 also recommended safety and health courses to be made compulsory for the tourist guides’ well-being and safety. In addition, TG11 suggested counselling service for tourist guides who are adversely affected by their jobs. All recommendations mentioned in this paragraph should be taken seriously by the government for the welfare of all tourist guides in this country.

To conclude, this writing should be able to attract the attention of all parties in the tourism industry to acknowledge the issues that surround the tourist guides in Malaysia. They play a very significant role where tourism is concerned and their rights need to be taken care of. Once this is resolved, common anomalies that occur in our tourism industry could be averted. The good image displayed by the tourist guides could help boost our economy and many sectors in the country could be improved.

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### **Corresponding Author**

Mimi Sofiah Ahmad Mustafa

MARA University of Technology Melaka Branch, Malaysia

Email: mimi@uitm.edu.my

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