

Jordanian Tour Guides' Communication Competency

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Abstract—Tour Guides are the country's unofficial faces to visitors, and their ability to convey information effectively may make or break a trip. This study examines tour guides' communication skills and overall performance. The data were collected from 225 expert tour guides in the Jordanian cities: Aqaba, Wadi Rum, and Petra. Factor analysis is performed on 32 communication competence measures to discover the underlying performance characteristics. The study used importance–performance analysis to determine the difference between how tour guides rate their performance and how important they think certain things are. The study revealed that tour guides need improvement in verbal skills such as grammar, manner of speech, and choice of words, as well as non-verbal behaviours such as approachability and the ability to remain friendly while maintaining a specific personal space. The study revealed that the importance–performance analysis mode, a valuable management tool, may determine where marketing resources might be invested to develop and increase the quality of tour guide operations. While most professional tour guides acknowledge the significance of the abovementioned things, they often fail to use them when dealing with and communicating with visitors. This suggests that administrative attention be focused on enhancing tour guides' verbal communication skills with visitors.

Index Terms—importance-performance analysis, Jordan, communication competency, tour guides

I. INTRODUCTION

Tour guides play an essential role as cultural representatives of their host countries (Dawood et al., 2016). In this capacity, they create unforgettable experiences for tourists because of their direct interaction with them. The performance of tour guides is a factor that plays a role in efficient tourism destination marketing, the building of an image, and related word-of-mouth. In addition to many other qualifications, strong communication skills are essential for the success of professional tour guides (Zeljko et al., 2022; Zhang & Chow, 2004). Due to their daily face-to-face encounters with visitors from diverse cultural, ethnic, social, and religious backgrounds, tour guides' language skills must be continuously honed. The diminution of physical distances brought about by advances in information technologies and transportation has increased the frequency of face-to-face engagement (Chen, 2005). People from different cultures can only communicate effectively in the modern world if they keep their communication skills polished and refined. Higher levels of visitors' satisfaction and location loyalty, as well as more favourable word-of-mouth, may be attributable to tour guides' practical communication skills.

Baum et al. (2007) pointed out the contribution of tour guides to marketing, image, and branding. In response, communication competence (CC) abilities may improve tour guides' self-esteem, self-efficacy, and motivation (Songschan et al., 2010). The effectiveness of tour guides is crucial to the prosperity of the tourist sector worldwide (Karatepe et al., 2007). However, relatively few studies have examined the correlation between communication skills and tour guide effectiveness, and there have been requests for more studies in this area (Dawood et al., 2016; Huang et al., 2010; Peng & Chen, 2021; Zeljko et al., 2022).

The current study hypothesises that self-evaluation might provide data that can contribute to a better understanding of tour guides' behaviours and performances. Martin et al. (1994) claim that many scholars in the field of communication who share similar cultural patterns have similar CC behaviour profiles. Nevertheless, these scholars also contend that people who engage in other cultural activities may evaluate these opportunities differently, and numerous further studies support this idea (Chi & Qu, 2008; Leclerc & Martin, 2004; Weiler & Yu, 2007). These recent studies indicate significant differences in communication styles across African-American, European-American, Hispanic-American,

French, German, and British populations (Leclerc & Martin, 2004). Moreover, limited amounts of this study investigate CC in particular circumstances (Peng & Chen, 2021; Zeljko et al., 2022). Due to the unique nature of host–tourist contact and interaction, the tourism industry provides an excellent environment for intercultural communication research. Chen and Starosta (1996) and Leclerc and Martin (2004) highlighted the significance of expanding intercultural communication research in tourism-related contexts. They contend that when people go to different locales, their tourism activities provide an opportunity to improve international understanding and communication. Tour guides are vital participants in intercultural encounters within the tourist industry. The present study, therefore, looks at how transferable some aspects of guide–tourist exchanges are in Jordan (Al Najdawi et al., 2017; Mohammad et al., 2014).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Communication Competency

Since the 1960s, international CC has been one of the primary study subjects in several academic disciplines. CC is defined as a group's innate or learned skill that facilitates comprehension via verbal or nonverbal encounters (Ricard, 1993). Individuals' degrees of competence are defined by the equilibrium between their intrapersonal system's complexity and its adaptation to the interpersonal environment (Harris, 1979). Redmond (2000), on the other hand, redefined CC in connection to cultural characteristics, including cultural variability, cultural empathy, cultural ambiguity, and cultural distance. Beamer (1992) described CC as "a person's capacity to encode and decode concepts that match those in the other communicator's repository". Tour guides frequently engage in conversations with visitors from different cultures, and thus they must grasp cultural differences to interact with foreign visitors. Guides' strategies must include their perspectives on the optimal method to connect with visitors in a cross-cultural context.

Cross-cultural communication in business is defined by Sanchez et al. (2010) as "the ideal approach for a seller (buyer) from one culture to process a message from a buyer (seller) from another culture." Existing business and economics literature acknowledges the significance of such investigations. However, numerous studies have also highlighted that communication proficiency is essential for tour guides (Peng & Chen, 2021; Zeljko et al., 2022). Cohen (1985) recognised the significance of relationships between visitors and tour guides and that tour guides' communication skills influence the success or failure of tourists' overall experiences. Cohen (1985) acknowledged that interactions between tourists and tour guides are essential and that tour guides' CC affect how visitors feel.

Leclerc and Martin (2004) examined how French, German, and American visitors rate the significance of tour guides' communication skills. The authors sought to generalise the findings of study by Martin et al. (1994) that examined the impact of situational and cultural circumstances on non-Hispanic and Hispanic communication competence. The Leclerc and Martin's (2004) study, nevertheless, proposed more investigation with diverse representative populations and cultures to improve the generalizability of their results.

Zhang and Chow (2004) employed the importance-performance analysis (IPA) paradigm to evaluate the performance of Hong Kong's tour guides from the perspective of mainland Chinese outbound tourists. The study assessed 20 qualities of tour guide services, with language proficiency being the sole qualification that falls within the communication. According to the findings, nearly one-fifth of all respondents felt that the tour guides needed to be more proficient in the use of the Mandarin language while communicating with them. Hence, it would be reasonable for the authors to suggest that the tour guides participate in training classes to improve their language skills.

Leclerc and Martin (2004) employed the CC measure developed by Martin et al. (1994) to explore worldwide variations in the recognised relevance of tour guides' communication competency. However, they made several adjustments to the original scale. In their research, they looked at visitors from France, Germany, and the United States who had been to the southwestern United States. They asked these travellers about their thoughts on the significance of four non-verbal components (approachability, poise, attentiveness, and touch) and three verbal components (language adaptability, interpersonal inclusion, and assertiveness) when it comes to the intercultural CC of tour guides. The majority of non-verbal and verbal competence behaviours were considered more significant by the American visitors than by the European tourists. Furthermore, the findings indicated that when it comes to analysing cultural differences, communication competencies, except for assertiveness, are of greater significance for American visitors than European tourists.

Martin et al.'s (1994) and Dawood et al.'s (2016) studies serve as the foundation and inspiration for the current study, which examines the CC of professional tour guides. Although each of these studies poses unique hypotheses and employs a distinct methodology, the current study employs a CC measure comparable to that of the two abovementioned types of research. This study is based on Martin et al.'s (1994) communication competence model. This framework has been employed in business literature, particularly in cross-cultural contexts, although tourism literature has yet to use it considerably (Leclerc & Martin, 2004; Sanchez et al., 2010). Even though this literature review offers solid evidence that CC is an essential component that leads to effective interaction, this subject is still understudied in the tourism industry. However, tourism heavily relies on contact between the host (tour guides, local inhabitants) and the tourist. As revealed, the tour guide's non-verbal and verbal CC performance needs to be better explored.

B. Tour Guides

Tour guides, as the primary point of contact between a destination and its visitors, serve as cultural ambassadors who significantly influence visitors' experiences. The World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA) describes a tourist guide as an individual who directs tourists in the language of their choice and explains the cultural and natural heritage of a region and who typically holds an area-specific certification granted and/or recognised by the relevant authorities (WFTGA, 2003). Huang et al. (2010) describe this definition in detail in each tour guide's job description since it sets the stage for how the guide and the visitor will interact. Furthermore, Yu et al. (2002) refer to tour guides in various studies using various terms such as "tour leader," "local guide," and "tour coordinator". In addition, there are a variety of responsibilities that tour guides might perform. Despite these differences, experts are aware of the tour guide's function in creating a remarkable visitor experience.

Through their acquaintance with a destination's sights and culture and their CC, tour guides may transform ordinary trips into unforgettable experiences for visitors (Ap & Wong, 2001). Tour guides' communication skills may determine a trip's success or failure (Luoh & Tsaur, 2014). Cohen (1985) used terms such as "pathfinder" and "mentor" to define the contemporary tour guide. In addition to this, he outlined the four primary functions a tour guide should fulfil: instrumental, social, interactional, and communication responsibilities. The instrumental function is connected to the objective of finishing the trip as a social business. The social function of the guide is related to the dedication shown to the tour's constituents. The guide's interactional function is connected to the fact that he or she acts as a go-between for tour participants and other tour stakeholders, including residents, businesses, and landmarks. To perform a communication role, a guide must be able and eager to share knowledge about the trip with guests. The communication factor heavily influences the interaction between tourists and guides since the guide's primary function is to impart knowledge.

A guide, according to Pond (1993), can bear the burden of leadership; who is a knowledgeable guide who shares interesting facts and history with visitors; who is a representative who makes guests feel welcome and promotes the area in a manner that makes them want to return; who can make their visitors feel at home; and one who is skilled in all four of the jobs mentioned above and can switch between them as needed. Even though researchers were aware of the paucity of studies on tour guides at the time, studies have made minimal headway since then, with some notable exceptions. They include studies on tour guide training, certification, ecotourism, conservation, visitors' assessments of tour guides' performances, and advertising and brochure endorsements (Huang et al., 2010; Lin et al., 2008; Peng & Chen, 2021; Poudel et al., 2013; Syakier & Hanafiah, 2021). Nevertheless, a few researchers have examined the connection between communication skills and tour guide performance (Huang et al., 2010; Peng & Chen, 2021; Zeljko et al., 2022).

Overall, the studies that have already been done on tour guides show an urgent need to look at the verbal and nonverbal communication skills of tour guides to discover strategies that enhance them. Numerous existing studies on tour guides have investigated the opinions of visitors about their tour guides. As such, the present study hypothesises that self-evaluation might give further information on the effectiveness of tour guides in implementing communicative activities. Generally, Bem (1972) asserted that individuals could recognise and explain their attitudes, feelings, and other interior states by observing their own conduct. Through their personal experiences, professional tour guides have a greater awareness of the communication skills necessary to communicate successfully with a varied group of visitors from various sociocultural environments.

In contrast, travellers' ratings of tour guides' CC vary widely among cultures. For instance, Westerners and Easterners may assess verbal and nonverbal CC similarly. Visitors from Western cultures may consider it poor conduct to avoid shaking hands with their guides, while women from Middle Eastern cultures may feel it improper to shake hands with their guides. Even though Stewart et al. (2000) think it might be hard to self-assess one's skill level, they still conclude that self-evaluation instruments are an excellent way to judge how well staff members are doing their jobs.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. *Study Tools*

The study used a questionnaire developed by Dawood et al. (2016) that produced an excellent response rate in comparable studies. The study provides respondents with two sets of communication competency-related behaviours specified by Martin and Hammer (1989) and Martin et al. (1994). These two groups of behaviours encompass 32 actions, 16 of which are non-verbal (such as keeping direct eye contact, smiling, and nodding) and 16 of which are verbally communicated (e.g., talking about topics of mutual interest, sharing personal information).

Validity and reliability concerns with the verbal and non-verbal CC components were investigated by Martin et al. (1994) and subsequently by Leclerc and Martin (2004). The study uses a four-point Likert scale (one means disagree, and four means agree) to examine respondents' opinions of a tour guide's communication competency. In addition, respondents were asked to evaluate their performance in these areas using a four-point Likert-type scale (where one is extremely poor and four is very excellent). The study uses a four-point Likert scale for a self-reported questionnaire regarding self-behavior. This particular form of scale is a semi-forced scale that allows participants to select a definite response rather than remaining neutral. Garland (1991) convincingly revealed that removing the neutral point can reduce the social desirability bias caused by people wanting to impress scholars. The four-point Likert scale evaluates performance and minimises social desirability bias (e.g., excellent, good, bad, or poor). The study uses this four-point

scale to evaluate communication competence rather than using agree/disagree statements. In addition, six questions in the questionnaire inquire about the respondents' social communication features.

B. Study Sample

The study gathered data from 225 professional tour guides in the Jordanian cities of Aqaba, Wadi Rum, and Petra. During an annual seminar series, the Jordanian Ministry of Tourism provided, the guides were asked to answer the questionnaire. The tour guides primarily serve travellers from Europe. The study concentrates on such a specific set of guides since the questionnaire's communication components were constructed using Western participants, and the measurement scale is thus only valid for Western respondents. The questionnaire was filled out by almost 75% of the attendees. As a result, this sample represents 52% of all professionally licensed tour guides registered with the administrative area of the Aqaba, Wadi Rum, and Petra Tour Guides' Association.

IV. RESULTS

Martilla and James (1977) created the IPA method, which has been widely used in different disciplines due to its simplicity and efficacy in showing the position of assorted attributes in a visually appealing format, as shown in Figure 1.

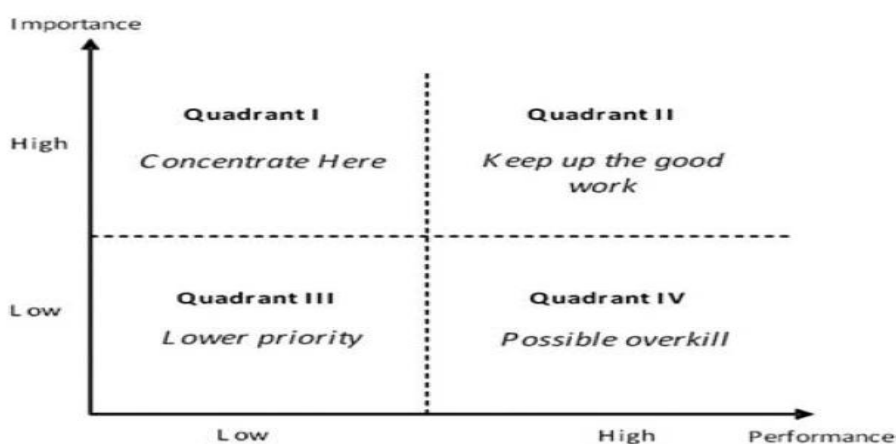


Figure 1. Importance-Performance Analysis

The upper left quadrant of this model describes high levels of significance, but its performance is lower than the mean. This quadrant illustrates the degree of CC that is thought to be present. It is imperative that the performance here be elevated to reflect its level of significance. When both variables are much higher than the mean, the data in the upper right quadrant represents high significance and high performance. This quadrant demonstrates effective management with high levels of performance commensurate with the significance put on components of excellent communication competency. The elements in the bottom left quadrant are rated lower than average in terms of both their relevance and their performance. This section is considered a low priority for further examination. The qualities in the lower right quadrant have higher performance than significance. This implies that the focus is placed on superfluous competence, resulting in a possible waste of resources. Numerous investigations have examined the reliability and validity of the IPA method (Dawood et al., 2016; Liu, 2010; Peng & Chen, 2021). Abalo et al. (2007) and Dawood et al. (2016) suggested that ordinal preferences are superior to metric measurements for the vital dimension. They provided a method to convert the ordinal measure into a new metric scale compatible with the IPA grid. The incorrect positioning of grid lines is one of the most significant challenges scholars experience while using IPA. Scholars use the grand, actual, or median mean (O'Leary & Adams, 1982; Ziegler et al., 2012; Zeljko et al., 2022).

Following Dawood et al. (2007), the present study employs a partition that merges the quadrants by extending the top left quadrant of the original Martilla and James' (1977) partition. The new area encompasses the whole space above the diagonal, where importance and performance are equal, as illustrated in Figure 2. According to this MIPA framework, management improvement efforts are warranted for each item whose significance value is higher than its corresponding performance grade. On the other hand, any evaluator-perceived significant item with poor performance suggests a need for remedial action. Priority is placed on enhancing evaluation criteria positioned above the dividing line (Ziegler et al., 2012). The original model's interpretation of the parts below the diagonal has stayed the same.

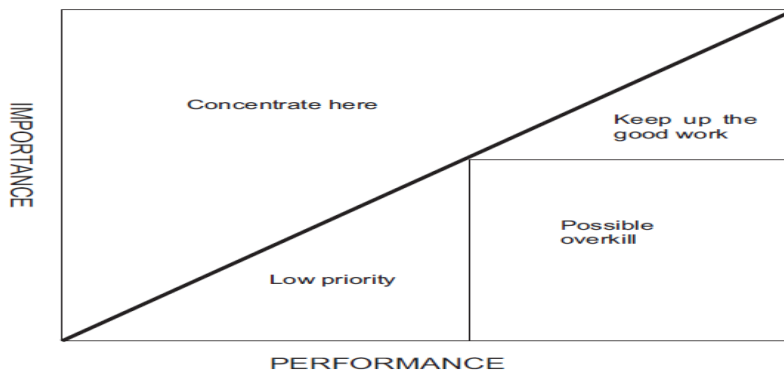


Figure 2. The Partitioning of the IPA Grid

A. Demographic Characteristics

SPSS 20 was used for data analysis. 88% of the 225 responses were male, while only 12% were female. The age group from 26 to 35 years accounted for 45.3% of the responses, followed by the group from 36 to 45 years with 54.7%. The highest number of survey respondents, 86.2%, indicated an average income range between JOD 701 and 1599, while the lowest portion of participants, 13.8%, reported an average income range of JOD 1600 or more. In addition, the biggest category of respondents held a bachelor's degree (84 per cent), followed by those with a high school diploma (12.1%), a master's degree (3.4%), and a doctorate (0.5%). Around 33% of respondents responded that they had between 6 and 12 years of experience as tour guides, 28.12% had 13 to 19 years of experience, 22.1% had 20 years of experience, and 16.78% had experience between 1 and 5 years.

B. Factor Analysis

The component analysis structure matrix and Cronbach's alpha for CC dimensions are shown in Table 1. This study's Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of 0.88 indicates an acceptable sample and data fit for factor analysis. In order to extract the factors, their eigenvalues must be greater than one, and the factor loading of the variables must be greater than 0.30, as Hair et al. (2010) indicated. Following classification into six factors, 23 components are kept, identified, and ordered based on their variable mean scores. These include language ability, touch and assertiveness, interpersonal and cultural inclusion, attentiveness and poise, approachability, and friendliness. The six factors account for 68.54 per cent of the total. The Cronbach's alpha values of the collected factors range from 0.85 to 0.94, indicating that their internal consistency ranges from good to excellent. They are significantly more significant than the lowest value of 0.60, considered an acceptable reliability indicator in studies comparable to this one.

TABLE 1
FACTOR ANALYSIS OF TOUR GUIDE PERFORMANCE ITEMS

Factors and Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's α	Variance Explained	Eigen-values
Assertiveness and touch		0.941	14.202	1.64
Touch will be utilised.	0.674			
A modest forward tilt is required to call attention.	0.628			
One should ask visitors questions about themselves.	0.556			
Agreement should be indicated by nodding the head.	0.625			
Show close interest.	0.691			
Interpersonal/cultural inclusion		0.882	9.43	1.85
One must always exhibit agreement with visitors.	0.778			
One must constantly converse with visitors.	0.749			
Nice compliments should be given to visitors.	0.744			
The focus of the discussion will be on the visitors' home country.	0.698			
Visitors should be introduced to other visitors participating in the tour.	0.596			
Poise and attentiveness		0.914	11.670	2.42
A tour guide must adopt a distinct posture.	0.741			
Maintain direct eye contact while speaking.	0.766			
Pay close attention to visitors.	0.775			
Mimics will be used.	0.756			
Language ability		0.921	13.025	2.78
Words should be chosen carefully.	0.711			
Must communicate in a clear manner.	0.712			
Correct use of the foreign language's grammar is required while speaking it.	.587			
Avoid using slang.	0.568			
Friendliness		0.881	13.415	1.98
Exhibit always a happy face.	0.505			
Must be accessible and friendly with tourists.	0.638			
Approachability		0.857	8.52	1.82
must look nice	0.811			
Approach visitors with friendliness.	0.786			
A certain distance should be maintained from the visitor.	0.788			
KMO	0.87			
Barlett's test of significance	0.003			

C. Importance-Performance Analysis

The findings of the IPA model are provided in Table 2. This study's results have been noted on a four-section grid. According to the original IPA model proposed by Martilla and James (1977), the junction point of the importance (Y) and performance (X) axes for this grid is the scale means. The following is a rundown of the outcomes of placing the items:

- *Keep up the excellent work*: This part has five dimensions, indicating that these factors are significant and that guides perform admirably on each variable, namely that good aspects of Jordan will be highlighted during the trip, correct use of the foreign language's grammar is required while speaking it, opinions should be expressed plainly, mimics will be used, and visitors shall be addressed using a moderate volume.
- *Concentrate here*: This category contains twelve elements: Effective (attractive) words should be employed during the tour, personal things about oneself shall be shared with visitors, tour guides must look nice, guides approach visitors with friendliness, a certain distance should be maintained from the visitor, words should be chosen carefully, guides must communicate straightforwardly, guides always exhibit a happy face, guides approach tourists in a friendly manner, guides maintain direct eye contact while speaking, guides pay close attention to visitors, and a modest forward tilt is required to call attention. Participants rated these items as high in importance but lower in performance.
- *Low priority*: In this quadrant, nine items were identified as being of lesser importance and performance, and they belong in this category: one must always exhibit agreement with visitors; one must constantly converse with visitors; one should ask visitors questions about themselves; the focus of the discussion should be on the visitors' home country; nice compliments should be given to visitors; visitors should be introduced to other visitors participating in the tour; visitors should be introduced to residents; guides should laugh together with visitors; guides should show close interest; and agreement should be indicated by nodding the head.
- *Possible overkill*: This quadrant contains only four items: Jordan shall be discussed during the trip; guides should refrain from slang; touch will be utilised; and handshaking with visitors will be encouraged. The elements are ranked highly for performance but less so for importance, as illustrated in Table 2.

TABLE 2
IMPORTANCE – PERFORMANCE MEAN VALUES AND STANDARD DEVIATION

Factors and Items	Importance		Performance	
	Mean dev.	Std.	Mean dev.	Std.
Assertiveness	2.83 0.75		2.98 0.78	
1. One must always exhibit agreement with visitors.	2.22 0.81		2.35 0.84	
2. One must constantly converse with visitors.	2.38 0.92		2.49 0.87	
3. Effective (attractive) words should be employed.	3.65 0.69		3.60	0.70
Cultural topics	3.09 0.79		3.17 0.83	
4. Jordan shall be discussed during the trip.	3.16 0.76		3.27 0.89	
5. Good aspects of Jordan will be highlighted during the trip.	3.61 0.74		3.69 0.77	
6. One should ask visitors questions about themselves.	2.74 0.97		2.79 0.95	
7. The focus of the discussion will be on the visitors' home country.	2.35 0.87		2.45 0.85	
Interpersonal inclusion	2.99 0.79		3.01 0.85	
8. Nice compliments should be given to visitors.	2.44 0.88		2.51 0.87	
9. Visitors should be introduced to other visitors participating in the tour.	2.12 0.78		2.39 0.97	
10. Visitors should be introduced to local residents.	3.55 1.02		3.56	0.84
11. During the tour, personal things about oneself shall be shared with the visitor.	3.22 0.74		3.19	0.95
Poise	3.81 0.65		3.59 0.71	
12. Must look nice	3.85 0.88		3.79 0.70	
13. Approach visitors with friendliness.	3.65 0.77		3.67 0.99	
14. A certain distance should be maintained from the visitor.	3.92 0.89		3.91 0.95	
Language ability	3.77 0.65		3.73 0.62	
15. Words should be chosen carefully.	3.88 0.63		3.85 0.66	
16. Must communicate in a clear manner	3.75 0.77		3.77 0.78	
17. Correct use of the foreign language's grammar is required while speaking it.	3.65 0.62		3.49 0.74	
18. Avoid using slang.	2.65 0.89		2.71 1.05	
19. Opinions should be expressed clearly.	3.86 0.66		3.88 0.55	
Nonverbal factors Approachability	3.39 0.80		3.45	0.81
20. Exhibit always a happy face.	3.74 0.55		3.75	0.61
21. Must be accessible and friendly with visitors.	3.44 0.95		3.56	0.98
22. Laugh together with the visitor.	2.88 0.67		2.93	0.77
23. Approach tourists in a friendly manner.	3.69 0.74		3.68 0.99	
Attentiveness	3.33 0.73		3.35 0.82	
24. Show close interest.	2.89 0.68		2.95	0.68
25. Mimics will be used.	3.55 0.90		3.54	0.91
26. Maintain direct eye contact while speaking.	3.73 0.65		3.71 0.66	
27. Pay close attention to visitors	3.91 0.82		3.89	0.77

28. Agreement should be indicated by nodding the head.	2.19 0.73	2.17 0.79
29. A modest forward tilt is required to call attention.	3.12 1.09	3.14 0.80
Touch	2.85 0.59	2.86 0.60
30. Touch will be utilised.	2.12 0.57	2.11 0.70
31. Handshaking with visitors	2.09 0.63	2.10 0.58
32. Visitors shall be addressed using moderate volume.	3.25 0.61	3.28 0.55

V. DISCUSSION

Scholars in tourism recognise that tour guides may break a visitor's experience; however, an evident lack of study on the tour guiding profession still needs to be made. The present study is the first to investigate professional tour guides' communication skills from their point of view in the Arab World, contributing to the growing body of literature on tourism theory. The study's primary objective is to determine the present state of the performance of professional tour guides in terms of their verbal and nonverbal communication competencies using the IPA. The study highlighted six factors: assertiveness and touch, interpersonal and cultural inclusiveness, poise and attention, linguistic proficiency, friendliness, and approachability. Most communication competencies are ranked as having a lower level of importance by European tourists, whereas, in general, visitors regard the majority of CC categories as being significant to them.

According to Dawood et al. (2016), Turkish tour guides only ranked 15 CC behaviours as more essential than how they achieved them. The present study demonstrated that Jordanian tour guides consider just 12 CC characteristics to be more significant than their performance on those behaviours, in contrast to Zhang and Chow's (2004) and Luoh and Tsaur's (2014) results. The study contradicts Dawood et al.'s (2004) findings that revealed the mean relevance of linguistic ability surpasses the mean performance. This causes most of these variable elements to fall into the IPA's "concentrate here" quadrant. According to Dawood et al.'s (2016) analysis of visitors' assessments of Turkish tour guides' language skills and this study, the findings reveal that visitors to Turkey were more pleased with their tour guides' performance with language ability behaviours than visitors to Jordan. Particularly, the parts of verbal CC that need further work. Additionally, the elements are part of the non-verbal category and require administration focus. The previously described verbal and nonverbal CC criteria belong in the "concentrate here" category. While most professional tour guides acknowledge the significance of the things mentioned above, they often need to use them better when dealing with and communicating with visitors. This suggests that the administration should enhance the tour guides' verbal communication skills. Numerous studies, namely Ni et al. (2018) and Dawood et al. (2016), stressed the importance of training and learning courses in maintaining a business's competitive edge. Five things received a favourable review, and the advice for them is to keep up the good work. In addition to emphasising the significance of the characteristics above, tour guides are proficient in all of them. The results indicate that Jordanian tour guides excel in the qualities mentioned above. Tour guides must continue to employ these communication abilities effectively.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Practical Implications

The study offers a platform for tour organisations and operators to hire professional tour guides and much better guidance for enhancing the performance of professional tour guides via seminars that develop and improve their communications competency. Tourism businesses must recognise the significance of effective communication. If management pays close attention to the concerns mentioned above, it will significantly influence the quality of the visitors' experiences. In addition, people responsible for the training and development of tour guides may benefit from the procedures and instructions provided in this study for using the IPA approach to assess the performance of tour guides before and after training sessions. Managers may use the IPA grid to evaluate the quality of tour guides by focusing on regions where development is needed.

Furthermore, IPA is a simple method that might offer beneficial outcomes for managers. The approach is a primary diagnostic tool that can offer knowledge of the performance, communication competency, and other attributes of tour guides, including service quality. The findings may also be used to locate answers to the problems that have been uncovered and to direct new study funding in a more cost-effective manner since topics that need more attention can be evaluated in more depth.

B. Theoretical Implications

The study is the first effort to investigate the behavioural CC of tour guides from their points of view using IPA as an assessment instrument in the Arab World. According to the findings of this study, doing a self-evaluation can provide results that can improve overall comprehension of tour guides' own performances and behaviours. Tour guides are subject matter specialists who continuously converse with guests and other tour guides. This study illustrates the

demand for more studies measuring communication skills in various cultures. The necessity is established through the study of Jordanian tour guides. In addition to this, it offers a stage upon which CC constructs may be compared across different cultures. This study improves the validity and dependability of the instrument employed in this study. It adds to the field by giving an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of this aesthetically and statistically straightforward instrument. The study demonstrates how the modified IPA grid provided by Dawood et al. (2016) may be utilised quickly and effectively to assess tour guides' communication competency. With this updated approach, management improvement efforts are warranted for every item with a higher relevance rating than its corresponding performance ranking. It is necessary to take remedial action if the performance of any aspect deemed essential by the responder falls short of its significance.

C. Limitations and Future Study

This study is primarily based on an examination of the performance of Jordanian tour guides; consequently, findings may not readily apply to tour guides operating in different regions of Jordan, particularly those practising tour guiding in the south of Jordan, where economic and tourist sector growth has lagged (Khasawneh et al., 2022). Nevertheless, scholars argue that the impact of this restriction is modest since Jordan has implemented a statewide certification system for tour guides, and any qualified tour guide is permitted to lead tour groups anywhere in the country. The absence of geographical constraints on the tour guide profession improves the homogeneity of the country's tour guide population. In addition, the analysis of the findings could be more extensive since the data were taken from a convenience sample. A future study could enhance the generalizability of the results by employing more representative samples from various cities. This approach has at least one restriction, although the present work employs a modified IPA method and enhances the conventional IP method by applying gap analysis. The findings may effectively describe the group while failing to characterise any person or subgroup adequately. Before administering the IPA, tour guides must be split into relevant groupings. Ni et al. (2018) suggest that cluster analysis may be used to separate categories based on direct significance metrics. Then, an IPA is conducted on each segment, and the segment-by-segment validity of the model can be assessed.

This study used a four-point Likert measure to assess tour guides' communication competency; this measurement has no neutral point and therefore does not permit respondents to provide a neutral response. Future studies should focus on enhancing the external validity of this study by employing more representative samples from other cultures using five-, seven-, or even ten-point Likert scales to increase the generalizability of the results. Scholars could expand the application of the IPA method by incorporating the opinions of visitors.

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