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Analyzing tourist satisfaction towards tour guides performance at Parama Iswari Exhibition

Hossiana Geananda Putri^{1*}, Sevira G. A. Maturbongs¹, Yohana Agnescia¹, and Hesti Purwaningrum¹

Abstract

Purpose - The purpose of this study is to examine how tour guide skills, knowledge, and attitude—through intrapersonal and interpersonal servability—affect tourist satisfaction at the Parama Iswari Exhibition.

Methodology/Design/Approach - The study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data triangulation and focus group discussions. Data were collected through direct observation, interviews, and document studies.

Finding - The study found that the tour guides' intrapersonal and interpersonal servability performance positively influenced tourist satisfaction. This highlights the importance of the competency of tour guides, including their skills, knowledge, and attitudes, in enhancing the overall tourist experience.

Originality/Value - This research emphasizes the role of tour guides' competencies in influencing tourist satisfaction. It underlines how the tour guide's personal and interpersonal qualities can significantly impact the quality of the tourist experience, offering insights for improving service standards in exhibitions and similar settings.

Keywords tour guide, tourist satisfaction, Parama Iswari Exhibition

Introduction

Tourism is a rapidly growing service industry where tourist satisfaction serves as a primary indicator of success. In modern tourism, travelers seek not only beautiful destinations but also immersive and memorable experiences. In this context, tour guides play a crucial role as mediators between tourists and the destinations they visit. A tourist guide serves as a link between travelers and the local community, facilitating communication and helping to bridge any cultural or language gaps that might arise during the trip (Larisa, 2014). Their role extends beyond merely conveying information; they facilitate cultural interactions and provide tourists with unforgettable experiences. A competent tour guide is evaluated not only by their knowledge of the destination but also by their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, as well as their professional attitude.

*Correspondence:

Hossiana Geananda Putri
hossianageananda@gmail.com

¹Department of Tourism, Sekolah Tinggi Pariwisata Ambarrukmo STIPRAM Yogyakarta, Indonesia



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A key factor in delivering optimal tourist experiences is servability, which refers to the tour guide's ability to serve tourists effectively through both interpersonal and intrapersonal interactions. Interpersonal aspects involve the guide's communication skills, their ability to present information engagingly, and their ability to build positive relationships with tourists. The skills and competencies of a tour guide significantly influence the emotions and knowledge that tourists gain during and after the tour (Satar et al., 2022). Intrapersonal aspects, on the other hand, involve self-control, role awareness, and sensitivity to the needs of tourists. Formal certification held by tour guides serves as evidence of their competence, giving tourists confidence that they are in the hands of professionals.

A prime example of the tour guide's importance can be seen in the "Parama Iswari: Mahasakti Keraton Yogyakarta" Exhibition, hosted by the Yogyakarta Palace (Keraton Yogyakarta). This exhibition is an effort to explore and highlight the role of women in the history of the Yogyakarta Palace, featuring artifacts from the era of Sultan Hamengkubuwono I to the present day. The exhibition not only displays a collection of items such as clothing, jewelry, manuscripts, and financial archives, but also offers new perspectives on women's roles within the social and historical structure of the Palace. The term "Parama Iswari," central to this exhibition, originates from Javanese language and means "langkung luhuring pawestri" or "more than an esteemed woman." This title has referred to the foremost women in Javanese royalty since the 9th century and continues to be preserved in the culture of the Nusantara.

Tour guides in this exhibition hold a pivotal role in explaining the deep historical and cultural contexts to visitors. Their responsibility is not only to convey factual information about the artifacts but also to create compelling narratives that resonate with the visitors, particularly by highlighting the significance of women's historical roles in the Yogyakarta Palace. Thus, the quality of the guides' communication and service becomes a determining factor in creating a satisfying experience for exhibition visitors.

This study aims to delve deeper into how tour guides' skills, knowledge, and attitudes—through both interpersonal and intrapersonal servability influence tourist satisfaction at the Parama Iswari Exhibition. The findings of the research indicate that the performance of servability by the tour guides in this exhibition significantly and positively impacted tourist satisfaction. Tourists were more satisfied when tour guides demonstrated high levels of competence in terms of their skills, knowledge, and professional attitude. Guides who could clearly convey information, act with friendliness, and proactively assist tourists were able to elevate the overall quality of visitors' experiences. The discrepancy between what tourists expect and what they actually experience reflects their perceptions of how well service providers perform (Amrullah et al., 2023).

By examining the impact of tour guides' knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the specific cultural context of the "Parama Iswari: Mahasakti Keraton Yogyakarta" Exhibition, this research highlights the importance of competent and certified tour guides in delivering quality experiences. The findings of this study can serve as a valuable reference for the tourism industry in developing training programs to enhance tour guide competencies, ultimately increasing visitor satisfaction and the success of cultural tourism events. Additionally, this study provides insights into how historical and cultural exhibitions can be made more engaging and educational for visitors, thereby enriching their appreciation of local heritage.

A skilled tour guide is one of the most significant assets a tourism company can possess, acting as the primary representative or "face" of the business (Çetinkaya & Öter, 2015). The tourism industry attracts visitors from various backgrounds, making it essential for professional and ethical guides to effectively represent and convey the image and values of a specific destination, as well as those of the nation as a whole (Kemboi & Jairus, 2018). From those statements above can be interpreted that tour guides are not merely information providers, but experience builders who connect tourists with the destination on a more personal and meaningful level. Therefore, enhancing tour guides' competencies, whether in communication skills, cultural knowledge, or professional conduct, is essential in ensuring tourist satisfaction. The conclusions of this study underscore the importance of investing in tour guide training and certification to ensure high-

quality service in the tourism industry, particularly in cultural exhibitions rich in historical value, such as the Parama Iswari Exhibition.

This research is going to solve and analyze the problem "How does the performance of tour guides influence tourist satisfaction at the Parama Iswari Exhibition?" with the aim of analyzing in depth the relationship between tour guide competencies and tourist satisfaction within the context of this culturally rich exhibition. Recognizing the significance of competent tour guides in creating satisfying experiences, the author intends to adopt the title "Analyzing Tourist Satisfaction Towards Tour Guides Performance In Parama Iswari Exhibition" as the focus of this study. This research is expected to provide valuable insights for the tourism industry in developing strategies to enhance the quality of tour guide services, as well as strengthen the understanding of the positive impact that high-quality tour guides have on visitor satisfaction.

Method

The design of qualitative research includes a few categories, which are phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, historical, case study, and narrative designs. This method purposely describes individuals, events, or conditions as they are in nature (Siedlecki, 2020). The qualitative descriptive method that the author used intends to understand tourist's perception objectively in the form of words and language by utilizing natural methods. Primary data is employed through data triangulation, which include observation, interview, and document studies. The result will be analyzed through two factors which are interpersonal and intrapersonal servability using the variable that Huang, Hsu, & Chan made.

Findings and discussion

Tour guide as a frontliner holds a pivotal role in delivering a message towards tourists through a fun and interactive interpretation. They are entrusted with the responsibility of imparting knowledge, enabling visitors to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the site (Kul et al., 2024). By providing valuable insights, they significantly enhance the overall experience for the visitors. Therefore, tour guides need to have effective communication, extensive cultural knowledge, and ability to create personal connections with tourists. These skills need to be given by appropriate authorities, because during tour activities the only reliable source that tourists can depend on is tour guide (Syakier & Hanafiah, 2022). To get a tour guide license in Indonesia, individuals must follow competency tests from the Ministry of Tourism and Economy Creative Indonesia or National Professional Certification Agency.

The article "The Effect of Tour Interpretation on Perceived Heritage Values: A Comparison of Tourists With and Without Tour Guiding Interpretation at a Heritage Destination" shows that tourists who received guided interpretation had a deeper appreciation of the site's historical, cultural, and educational values. Guided tours provided more context and enriched visitors' understanding, enhancing their overall experience and fostering a stronger connection to the heritage destination. In contrast, those without guides reported lower levels of engagement and understanding (Weng et al., 2020). The service that tour guides offer is a key to determine tourist satisfaction.

Tourist satisfaction is characterized as an evaluation where a feature of a product or service, or the overall product or service experience, delivers a gratifying level of consumption-related fulfillment. This includes cases where the fulfillment exceeds or falls short of expectations (Oliver, 2014). Performance of tour guides also held a pivotal role towards excelling tourist satisfaction. Other researchers have identified the performance of tour guides as a crucial element in the success of tour packages, significantly enhancing tourist satisfaction. Other findings also revealed that the professional competencies of tour guides have a significant effect on both service quality and tourist satisfaction. Furthermore, the quality of service provided by tour guides positively influences the level of satisfaction experienced by tourists (Cempena et al., 2021).

To achieve tourist satisfaction, skill is not the only variable that tour guides need to have. An excellent tour guide needs to have skill, knowledge, and attitude. Knowledge refers to the comprehensive set of information that an individual possesses in executing their tasks and responsibilities. Skills are the capabilities required to perform specific tasks or duties assigned to

workers, including the behavioral standards they adopt in selecting methods deemed more effective and efficient. Attitude encompasses the emotional responses—whether positive or negative that individuals exhibit in reaction to external stimuli, such as responses to economic crises or feelings regarding salary increases (Eysenck & Keane, 2013). This set of skill, knowledge, and attitude plays a huge role in the Parama Iswari Exhibition to reach tourist satisfaction.

Biannually, the Keraton Yogyakarta organizes a cultural exhibition aimed at promoting and disseminating local traditions and heritage to both the local community and tourists. Started from 6th October 2024 and ends at 26th January 2025, Parama Iswari Exhibition is held by Keraton Yogyakarta, Parama' means beauty or grace, while 'Iswari' refers to a queen, therefore this exhibition aims to showcase the beauty and strength of a queen in safeguarding the king within the Keraton. It also conveys the historical narrative from the reign of the first Queen of Keraton Yogyakarta to that of the current Queen. Since the exhibition is held within the Keraton, visitors are provided with a complimentary guide and tour of the palace, in addition to the Parama Iswari Exhibition. The guides, known as *abdi dalem*, have served in the Keraton for generations, granting them extensive knowledge of the history and intricacies of Keraton Yogyakarta.

The guide observed by the author is an *abdi dalem* who has served the Keraton for 67 years. Her name is Meni, and her rank is *jajar*. Before entering the Parama Iswari Exhibition, the author first given an explanation about Keraton Yogyakarta. The first room of the Parama Iswari Exhibition introduces the stereotypes that women face everyday, this is an audiovisual room with a mirror surrounding it. The second room highlights the role of women soldiers in Keraton Yogyakarta. Historically, the Queen of Yogyakarta also participated in warfare and played a significant role as a negotiator in maintaining the peaceful state of the palace.



Fig 1. Queen's Charter Display at Parama Iswari Exhibition.



Fig 2. Display of Tea Set Used for Negotiating.

The third room displays the *kacu abrit*, an attribute exclusive to the queen. It serves as a key to important locations within the palace. The following room discusses the queen's role in the economic state of Yogyakarta. The queens are responsible for recording income and expenses, including the salaries of the *abdi dalem*. In the next room, there is a display of metal plates, which is one of the queen's hobbies. The subsequent room focuses on the queen's heritage, showcasing

items such as batik used for weddings with the next queen. Finally, the last room features various ornaments, including brochures, *kebaya*, and a buffalo head.

The author evaluated the tour guide abilities in the Parama Iswari Exhibition through an analysis of both interpersonal and intrapersonal factors, which are critical for effective tour guiding. Interpersonal skills—such as communication, empathy, and collaboration—are essential for interacting with tourists, ensuring smooth interactions, and enhancing the overall tour experience. A guide must be able to convey information clearly, adapt to different audiences, and maintain harmony within the group, while also addressing questions and managing complaints in a friendly manner. Intrapersonal skills, including self-awareness, emotional regulation, and self-motivation, play an equally important role. These skills help guides handle stress, make quick decisions, and continually improve their professionalism.

A deep self-understanding influences a guide's willingness to learn and update their knowledge, keeping the information they share current and relevant. Moreover, a guide's positive attitude—marked by friendliness, patience, and respect—enhances the tourist experience, while confidence, responsibility, and strong intrinsic motivation help them carry out their duties with professionalism and ethical conduct. Together, these interpersonal and intrapersonal factors shape the effectiveness and success of a tour guide in providing a high-quality, enriching experience for tourists.

Table 1. Tour Guide Analysis Using Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Servability Factor

Factor	Criteria	Meets Criteria	Does Not Meet Criteria
Factor 1: Intrapersonal Servability			
Knowledge of Local Lifestyle	Tour guides are well-versed in the local people's way of living and can convey this knowledge to tourists effectively.	✓	
Taking Care of Customer Needs	They demonstrate a strong ability to understand and meet the individual needs of tourists, ensuring a smooth and enjoyable tour experience.	✓	
Sense of Humor	Guides use humor effectively to engage with tourists, creating a light and enjoyable atmosphere during the tour.		✓
Good Personality	Tour guides show friendly, approachable behavior, making tourists feel comfortable and welcome.	✓	
Friendly Demeanor	They maintain a welcoming attitude, being friendly and approachable at all times.	✓	
Good Health	The guides are physically able to perform their duties without issue, ensuring they can fully participate in guiding.	✓	
Knowledge of Tourist Attractions	They possess a strong understanding of the attractions they are guiding tourists through, enhancing the educational aspect of the tour.	✓	
Cultural Understanding	Guides are sensitive to the cultural backgrounds of their customers, adapting their communication and approach accordingly.	✓	

Factor		Criteria	Meets Criteria	Does Not Meet Criteria
Sense of Responsibility		Guides show commitment to their roles, ensuring tourists' safety and well-being throughout the tour.	✓	
Passion for Work		Their passion for guiding is evident in how they lead tours, keeping the group engaged and interested.	✓	
Empathy Customers	Towards	Guides are able to empathize with tourists' needs and situations, making accommodations as necessary.	✓	
Meeting Needs	Psychological	They understand and address the psychological needs of tourists, such as comfort, safety, and emotional support.	✓	
Factor 2: Interpersonal Servability				
Grooming and Appearance		Maintains a professional appearance and grooming standards, reflecting the professionalism of the organization.	✓	
Building Rapport		Demonstrates strong interpersonal skills, fostering rapport with tourists and encouraging positive group dynamics.	✓	
Time Management		Tour guides are skilled at managing schedules and timing.		✓
Crisis Management		Tour guides can handle unexpected urgent situations effectively.	✓	
Historical Knowledge		Tour guides possess knowledge about the history of the destination.	✓	
Activity Organization		Tour guides are capable of organizing activities related to the tour.	✓	
Politeness		Tour guides maintain politeness in their interactions.	✓	
Collaboration with Service Staff		Tour guides can cooperate with other service staff, such as drivers.	✓	
Language Proficiency		Tour guides are proficient in the required tour-guiding language.	✓	
Tour guides follow code of ethics		Guides demonstrate a commitment to following the ethical standards of their profession.	✓	
Good communication	interpersonal	Guides excel in communicating effectively with tourists, both individually and in groups.	✓	
Punctuality		Guides consistently arrive on time and ensure that the schedule is maintained throughout the tour.	✓	

Factor	Criteria	Meets Criteria	Does Not Meet Criteria
Sound judgment	Guides make good decisions in most situations, especially in challenging or unexpected circumstances.	✓	
Commentary performance	Guides deliver informative and engaging commentary that enhances the tourists' experience.	✓	
Adherence to itinerary	Guides follow the planned itinerary and daily schedule as closely as possible.		✓
Safety reminders	Guides regularly remind tourists about important safety protocols and guidelines.	✓	
Honesty and trustworthiness	Guides are reliable, honest, and build trust with the group.	✓	
Knowledge of destination's culture	Guides possess in depth knowledge of the cultural aspects of the destinations, enriching the educational experience.	✓	
Problem-solving ability	Guides are capable of resolving issues or conflicts that arise during the tour.	✓	
Accessibility	Guides are accessible and approachable whenever tourists need assistance or information.	✓	
Willingness to help	Guides show a proactive willingness to assist tourists in various situations.	✓	
Handling complaints	Guides manage customer complaints effectively, ensuring that issues are addressed to the satisfaction of tourists.	✓	
Introduction to reliable shops	Guides introduce tourists to reliable and trustworthy local shops or vendors, providing useful recommendations.	✓	

The table above indicates that Parama Iswari tour guides meet nearly all the essential criteria for effective guiding. Through the intrapersonal servability factor, the tour guides fulfill criteria related to local lifestyle knowledge, customer care, personality, friendliness, health, tourist attraction knowledge, cultural understanding, responsibility, passion for their work, and empathy toward customers. The guides demonstrate their knowledge of local lifestyles by explaining the social life surrounding the Keraton, spanning from ancient times to the present. Their good personality and friendly demeanor are intrinsic to the culture of Keraton Yogyakarta, where politeness and gentleness are expected. They warmly greet tourists with a smile, creating a comfortable and positive interaction, thus addressing the psychological needs of the visitors. Despite the advanced age of many tour guides at the Keraton, they maintain good health and stamina, thanks to the palace's provision of health insurance. This reflects not only physical well-being but also their passion and dedication to their work, which they have performed sincerely over many years.

Further essential criteria, such as knowledge of tourist attractions, cultural understanding, and sense of responsibility, are evident in their detailed explanations. They can recount the historical events that shaped the Yogyakarta Palace, including key policies, significant events, Javanese women's traditions, the symbolic architecture of the Keraton, and the royal heirloom collections. Additionally, they exhibit an appreciation for cultural differences, particularly with the many foreign visitors to the palace, balancing politeness with the responsibility to ensure accurate information delivery and maintaining the comfort and pace of the tour. The only criteria not fully met are a sense of humor. Many of the guides are older, which often leads to a sense of respect and deference from younger generations, creating a generational gap in humor styles. This age factor may also hinder a more dynamic psychological engagement with tourists.

Tour guides at the Parama Iswari Exhibition show a wide range of competencies that are essential for providing high-quality service to visitors, which is why they met almost all the criteria for interpersonal servability factor. Their grooming and appearance are marked by traditional attire, reflecting professionalism and respect for the local culture and environment. In terms of crisis management, these guides demonstrate the ability to maintain composure in the face of unexpected situations, ensuring the smooth delivery of information. They possess extensive historical knowledge about the Queen in Keraton and their contribution towards economy, politic, and social—showing that their knowledge is not limited towards the usual collection at Keraton, therefore, they can adapt well at the biannual event. They also explain the historical background, functions, and cultural values of each room visited in depth. Moreover, they are skilled in activity organization, including scheduling visits and facilitating interactions with visitors.

Politeness is a key attribute, as guides treat all visitors with respect and adhere to the cultural norms of the region. Collaboration with service staff within the palace is also strong, ensuring seamless coordination and enhancing the visitor experience. They greet every *abdi dalem* equally, not only their colleague of the same age, but also the younger one. Their language proficiency in both Indonesian and foreign languages enables effective communication with international tourists, ensuring clear explanations and responses to queries. Tour guides in this exhibition adhere to a strict code of ethics, which governs professional conduct, ensuring they respect both visitors and the environment, without exploiting situations for personal gain, they also follow the protocols strictly.

Effective interpersonal communication allows the guides to build rapport with visitors, creating a welcoming atmosphere and efficiently addressing any questions or concerns. Punctuality is a priority, ensuring adherence to schedules and providing an organized and enjoyable experience. Their sound judgment allows them to assess situations and make decisions that ensure visitor safety and satisfaction, while their commentary performance enhances the tour through engaging and informative storytelling, often telling a story about how the Queen back in the day had to protect the King, how they live their everyday life, etc.

Safety is also a focus, with guides providing safety reminders regarding procedures and restrictions, such as guidelines on photography. Their honesty and trustworthiness instill confidence in visitors, who trust that the information provided is accurate and reliable. Furthermore, they possess comprehensive knowledge of the destination's culture, enabling them to convey the cultural significance of the palace and its traditions to visitors. Tour guides also demonstrate strong problem-solving abilities, resolving challenges that arise during tours and quickly offering effective solutions. They are accessible, understanding the needs of diverse visitors, a ramp is builded in a certain place and in certain places where the ramp is not builded, they often help disable tourists. This exhibits a willingness to help, whether answering questions or addressing special needs. In the event of dissatisfaction, they are adept at handling complaints, listening attentively and finding satisfactory resolutions. Finally, by introducing visitors to reliable shops, they help enhance the overall tourist experience while also supporting the local economy, ensuring a positive and holistic visit for tourists.

The two aspects that the tour guide does not meet is time management and adherence to itinerary. This happens because there is usually no specific time that they have to follow in each place and there's no itinerary written as they did this by experience. Time management is only for tourists with appointments, tourists that do not reserve an appointment will be given the tour

guide in place with no specific itinerary to meet, therefore, the place that we will be taken to does not follow the order of the room given.

The explanation above shows interpersonal skills support effective interactions and create positive tourism experiences, while interpersonal skills enable tour guides to maintain professionalism and advance in their field. Tour guides who can combine both types of skills will be more successful in conveying information, guiding tourists, and maintaining a good attitude in any situation. This also proved that they have skill, knowledge, and attitude while doing their job. Their skill comes from years of hardwork and serving at the palace, their knowledge shown through their extensive story about the Queen's contribution towards Keraton Yogyakarta, and their polite attitude is a nature that they did not only while doing job, as they applied this in their everyday life. Through an intrapersonal and interpersonal servability that meets the criteria, tourists will feel cared for, understood and appreciated. This improves the overall traveler experience and ultimately increases their satisfaction. Proper self-management by tour guides enables them to provide consistently high-quality service even when faced with difficulties and unexpected situations, which also affects tourist satisfaction. Which means, they are able to meet the tourist satisfaction through this factor.

Conclusion

Tour guides, particularly those at the Parama Iswari Exhibition, play a pivotal role in enhancing the overall quality of tourist experiences, with customer satisfaction being largely fulfilled. Their effective combination of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills significantly enriches visitors' understanding and appreciation of the cultural and historical context. The guides' deep knowledge, empathy, and cultural sensitivity help create a stronger connection between tourists and the heritage site. Despite minor limitations in areas such as humor, time management, and adherence to itineraries, these did not detract from the high levels of customer satisfaction observed.

This study highlights the importance of tour guides possessing a well-rounded set of competencies, including communication skills, cultural and historical knowledge, and a positive, service-oriented attitude. This combination ensures that tourists feel valued, informed, and engaged, leading to a positive overall experience. The ability to balance interpersonal skills—such as effective communication and empathy—with intrapersonal qualities like self-awareness and emotional regulation is crucial for consistently delivering high-quality service, even under challenging conditions.

Customer satisfaction is achieved through this balance, demonstrating that tour guides who exhibit strong skills, knowledge, and attitude are able to meet and exceed the expectations of visitors. This highlights the need for ongoing professional development and training programs that focus not only on knowledge acquisition but also on refining these soft skills to maintain exceptional service standards, particularly in cultural heritage tourism. Future research should explore how generational differences among tour guides affect customer satisfaction, particularly regarding humor and interpersonal engagement. Additionally, it would be valuable to investigate how structured time management and itinerary adherence impact tourists' perceptions of service quality in heritage tourism settings. Longitudinal studies could also assess how evolving tourist expectations influence the competencies required for tour guides in various cultural and historical contexts.

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Availability of data and materials

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Author contributions

HGP and SGAM conceptualized the study and collected data. YA and HP analyzed improved the quality of the manuscript.

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