

Three Dimensional Quality System and Self-training of Successful Tour Guides

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Abstract

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How to become a successful tour guide is the main concern for every tour guide, and with the rapid development of tourism industry, there has been greater demand for more qualified tour guides. This study analyzes the positioning of the successful tour guide from the literal meaning and word formation of Chinese character “Dao You”, puts forwards the three dimensional quality system of successful tour guides, and finally expounds the five aspects of self training of successful tour guides.

Key Words : quality system, self-training, tour guide, service, China

I . Introduction

Tour guide is a representative type of work in modern tourism industry, which is renowned as “the soul of tourism industry” and “director of tour activities”. With the rapid development of tourism and leisure industry, tour guide service plays more and more important role in tour reception service. The quality of tour guide service has become the most sensitive sign of the quality of modern

tourists' leisure experiences. The development of tourism industry relies heavily on the whole improvement of tour guide service, which urgently requires the improvement of tour guides' qualities. Self-training is rather helpful for the improvement of the qualities of the tour guides. Related research has been continually attached importance to by academic researchers as well as travel operators.

II. Positioning of Successful Tour Guides

The positioning of successful tour guides includes the role and service.

1. Role Positioning

It can be analyzed by the word "tour guide".

1) TOUR: Touring In All Quarters

Tour guide service is a highly practical job. As the Chinese saying goes , "What gained from books are somewhat shallow". Tour guides should take theoretical knowledge as the foundation, practice more and use theoretical knowledge flexibly, accumulating technical experience during guiding. At the same time, it could open their horizons and enrich their knowledge of history and culture.

2) GUIDE: Guiding with Regularity

The original complex form of the Chinese character GUIDE is composed by the two characters of dao and cun. We could position the role of a successful guide by this. One of the explanations of the character dao in ancient Chinese prose dictionary is principle and law. Successful tour guides should master the inherent principles and laws of the work of guiding proficiently. Another explanation of dao is morality and ethics. Successful tour guides should have professional ethics.

The character can means measure. Successful tour guides are capable of controlling the measure during the guiding service, especially when dealing with

specific problems.

Therefore the role orientation of successful tour guide could be concluded as: the guide who proficiently masters the laws and skills of guiding service, owns noble ethical characters and dealing with problems flexibly and good at controlling the measures during the guiding service.

2. Service Positioning

1) Analysis of SERVICE

Each letter in the word SERVICE represents a request of the service provided by a successful tour guide.

S Smile. Smiling service is one of the key points of tour guides' psychological service. Smile is the expressing of enthusiasm and friendship and the symbol of sincere welcome. Smile will let tourists feel being treated cordially thus help communicating with tourists.

E Excellent. The soldier who doesn't want to be the general is not a good soldier. Tour guides should have a great aim to be an excellent and outstanding guide (ie. a successful tour guide).

R Ready. A successful tour guide should have a good sense of providing service on his own initiative. Make physical and psychological preparations beforehand and provide well prepared service.

V Viewing. Tourist of different nationalities, status and consuming levels should be equally treated.

I Inviting. To combine the basic common factors with special personal factors, that is, to provide tourist with extra service. Upon the standard create charming service.

C Creating. As the tour guide service faces many indefinite and unknown factors, tour guide should work creatively to settle unexpected incidences properly and instantly.

E Eye. Put overall situation in mind and deal with conflicts and problems during the journey with the consideration of tourists' interest and the sustainable development of this very industry.

2) High Quality Tour Guide Service: Normalized Service plus Individualized Service

It's high quality service that a successful tour guide provides, which is the combination of normalized service and individualized service. Normalized service, also called standard service, is not qualified for high quality service but just the basic requirements of tour guide service. A successful guide starts from the normalized service and provides the individualized service according to tourists' difference in personality and demands. What's more, tour guide's unique advantages and interests can help to form the guide's style.

III. Three Dimensional System of the Qualities of Successful Tour Guides

The quality system of a successful guide is divided into three dimensions of attitude, Emotional Quotient (EQ) and effectiveness as shown in Figure 1.

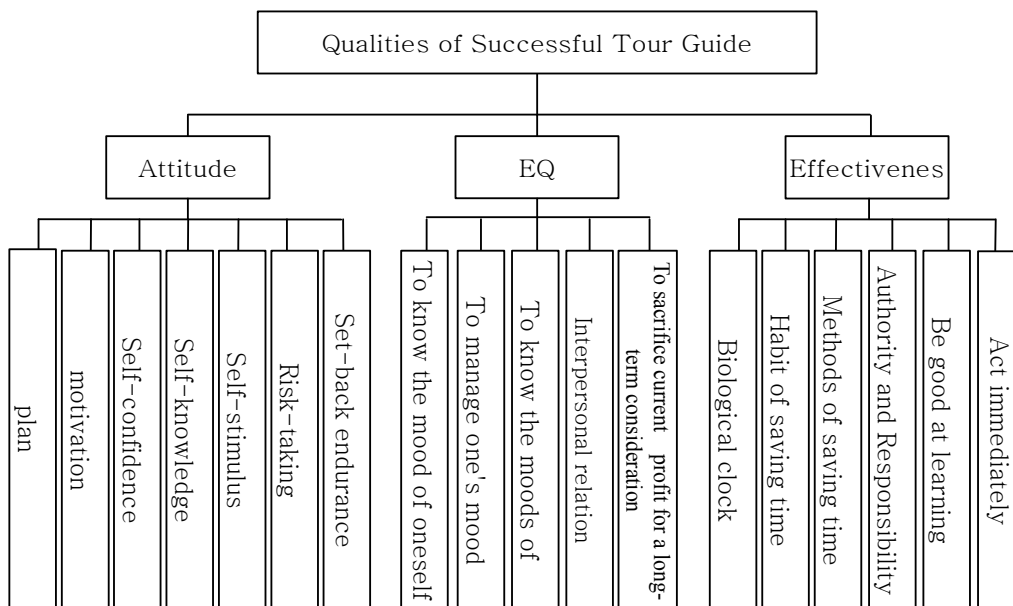


Figure 1 Three Dimensional Quality System of Successful Tour Guides

1. Attitude Dimension

Attitude plays a key role in guide service. Most tourism experts assess tour guide with the A.S.K. principle. The very first part to be examined is A attitude, for its evident importance. Attitude dimension includes 7 aspects as follows:

Plan. Preparation leads to a good result. Not only for the overall tour reception but also for the explanation to single scenic spot, preparation needs be done beforehand so that every activity can go along in order.

Motivation of achievements. As the American psychologist Fredrick Herzberg's Motivation hygiene theory, the sense of achievement is one of the major stimuli that make people active. Successful tour guide must have the "gold medal desire", making the aim to be the best tour guide.

Self confidence. Believe himself is capable of mastering all kinds of knowledge and professional skills and able to make use of them to satisfy tourists.

Self knowledge. A tour guide needs to form a clear and objective awareness of both his merits and shortcomings, so as to make best use of advantages and bypass the disadvantages. Never show off before tourists but to convey information with modesty.

Self stimulus. Make being an excellent guide the goal and see the goal and the process to achieve it as a kind of stimulus. Learn to amplify the approval from tourists and the rewards issued by the tour agency and trade association and make them the effective impetus to reach the career goal.

Risk taking. Every business is faced with risks at some extent. A tour guide ought to treat risks with a realistic attitude which means he should not simply escape but take the responsibility and learn a lot from the experiences of taking risks in order to reduce the negative effects from risks as much as possible.

Setback endurance. The way to success is never smooth. The object of guide service is complicate and tourists have various demands, which often causes mistakes in work and give rise to frustration. Guide workers should treat setback properly and improve their setback endurance.

2. E.Q. Dimension

E.Q. dimension is also called interpersonal relation dimension. One with high E.Q. always has good sociability, which means good and wide interpersonal

relation. Tour guide service is a kind of work that contacts with lots of people, so high E.Q. is the indispensable quality of a successful tour guide which includes five factors:

Get to know the mood of himself. During the process of guiding, always keep trace with mood of himself to know in which kind of state his mood is and what causes his mood.

Manage his mood. Guiding service is an interactive process. Guide's positive emotion will affect tourists and then tour activities will proceed more smoothly. Therefore, a tour guide needs to keep positive emotion and find out the factors that generate passive emotions, and then eliminate the negative effects from passive emotion and transfer them into positive ones.

Get to know the moods of tourists. Judge the tourists' mood states by their behaviors and manners in order to help them staying in good mood. When discovering tourists are in a poor mood, try to find out the reason and take measures to wipe it out or make adjustment.

Interpersonal relation management. When get along with tourists, try every effort to make good impression to them. Treat tourists equally and avoid emphasizing some tourists which may cause complaints from others. Contacting with cooperators, it's necessary to correctly position himself, respect and concern for cooperators and equally negotiate.

Scarify present profit for long term goal. Tour guides should have the ability of self control to resist the temptation or to give up short term profit for the achievement of the long term goal.

3. Effectiveness Dimension

Effectiveness means the ability to do the work rapidly and correctly, or efficiency. Tour guide service involves wide range of things and contains heavy and complicated content, which ask for higher level work efficiency. Effectiveness dimension consists of the following six elements:

Biological clock. Tour guides ought to know the regular of his biological clock and do the most important work during the highest effectiveness period so as to improve efficiency; get to know the regular of tourists' biological clock and

arrange activities such as sightseeing rationally accordingly, thus to alleviate tourists' tiredness and create more comfortable travel.

Habit of saving time. Tour guides should acquire the habit of saving time. Good preparation before starting off is an effective way to save time. What's more, thinking comprehensively before acting could reduce the time loss caused by fault.

Methods of saving time. These methods include: ABC Work Classified Method: do the most important work of type A firstly, and then the less important work of type B, etc. Utilize Tools: making use of kinds of communicating facilities such as fax, email and mobile phone to make reservation and contact with the travel service could save communicating time. Resorting to others: dealing with work related to other professional fields, it's advisable to resort to experts out of the travel agency.

Authority and Responsibility Distinguished. National guides, local guides and tour leaders should divide the work reasonably and take responsibility individually and cooperate with each other to improve efficiency.

Be good at learning. Knowledge economical era asks tour guides to master more and deepen knowledge. So tour guides ought to be good at learning from books, others as well as his own experiences.

Act immediately. The independence and time limitation of tour guide service requires that tour guides make decision at prime tense. It's an important quality for a successful tour guide to decide determinatively and take actions immediately after thinking thoroughly.

IV. Five Aspects of Self training of Successful Tour Guides

1. Honesty

"Honesty won't forge and the trusted won't deceive". Honesty is the basis of the operation of tourism industry. Tour guides should provide service in strict conformity with the content and standard in the contract signed with tourists, and do not ask for any extra fee by any way or embezzle part of what should be issued. Tour guide should also pay much attention to the promise he has made

and keep it, regarding the promise as valuable as gold.

An American travel agency had made a promise in its advertisement as following: "Our travel agency promise that in every tour there will be competent and professional tour leaders to escort. The leader is selected and trained to be well qualified. Your jet traveling provided by our travel agency is a trip with escort. From the beginning to the end there will be our refined escort to take care of you." A lady bought the product of 47 day tour in South America in this travel agency. During traveling in Brazil, the lady fell into the Amazon River carelessly. Though this was only an unforeseen accident, and the ship didn't belong to the travel agency and the tour guide was not the employee of the travel agency, the lady accused it when she came back. The court's judgment was: the advertisement and propaganda made the lady believe that the travel agency would take all the responsibility during the whole journey, so the travel agency should pay the lady over ten thousand dollars as a compensation.

The above case shows that honesty is the foundation of tour guide service.

2. Diligence

Use mouth diligently. Language is the basic skill of tour guide, who should practice more to improve their oral skills; when coming across problems, he ought to resort to someone more experienced and continue practicing to accumulate knowledge.

Use eyes diligently. Tour guides should be good at observing. Observe tourists' manners and behaviors at all times to assess their psychology so as to provide service accordingly; observe the number of group members at all times so as to prevent missing of tourists; observe the environment around and be on the alert at all times so as to prevent accidents.

Use hands diligently. Tour guide service is not only the work of mouth. During the journey tour guide should help those who are old or has poor constitution with their luggage. Besides, a tour guide is sure to be involved in some heavy physical activities.

Use feet diligently. A Tour guide needs to get some basic knowledge about the destination. If he is unfamiliar with the destination, he must make an on the

spot investigation in advance. During the journey, the tour guide should stay with tourists from the beginning to the end. Do not be afraid of walking much, let alone separate from the group.

Use brain diligently. This is the most important one among the five aspects of diligence in self training of successful tour guides. Besides ponder diligently, a tour guide is supposed to think from others' positions, base himself upon tourists' position and consider tourists, try his best to meet their requirement, and understand tourists' "faults" or excessive demands.

3. Ability

It refers to skills and techniques. Successful tour guides should pay special attention to the following three aspects of training and cultivation of skills.

Ability of escort and guide. The ability of escort and guide is through the whole process of tour activities, which influence the effect of guide service directly. This is the most complicated but very important ability.

Ability of language. Language is the key means to transfer information, communicate and deepen understanding, and the important tool of social intercourse. Accurate, clear and lively guiding language which can be easily understood could be so impressive that will not be forgotten for very long and make tourists feel it full of wit and humor.

Ability of explanation. Tour guide service is the art which combines performing art, language art and comprehensive art as a whole, which are reflected in tour explanation. Ability of explanation is the most difficult skill but could best embody the capability of a tour guide.

4. Flexibility

Tour guides ought to attach importance to the cultivation and training of the ability of understanding, sensitivity and flexibility.

Ability of understanding. It means being good at comprehension and react rapidly. Tour guide service is a heavy job that includes a lot of work to do and involves wide range of things. What's more, the objective condition is complicated

and changeable. Only those with great ability of understanding could finish every task with high quality smoothly and in time.

Sensitivity. Tour guide should train himself to have sharp eyes and keen ears, be extremely alert to changes both in the group and of the objective condition, thus could take measures accordingly in time. For instance, when getting to know the weather change of destination from weather forecast, the tour guide ought to consider immediately whether the itinerary and transportation should be adjusted.

Flexibility. Tour guide service should be provided according to the tourist, time and place. For example, when going to visit Thousand Islands Lake, tour guide meant to introduce the crystal water and beautiful green mountain by the verse of Yuan Mei: “the boat reaches Xing’an where the water is the most limpid. Green mountains appear one after another from the water. The top of the green mountain can be seen clearly. The boat seems to be cruising above the top.” However, it drizzles during the journey. It’s obviously not proper still to explain it according to plan. Then it will get better effect if the tour guide is flexible and use Su Shi’s verse “The shimmering waves delight the eye on sunny days; the dimming hills present rare view in rainy haze”.

5. Ying

This is a Chinese characters whose meaning is succeed. The way to the success for tour guides could be probed into by the structure of this character which consists of five parts: wang, kou, yue, bei and fan.

Wang sense of crisis. Nowadays the competition of tourist market is becoming fiercer and tourists require more individualized service. Tour guides must at all times be aware of danger and pressure that he may be surpassed even replaced by others in times of peace. Tour guides should have a strong sense of crisis, continuing self training in order to adapt oneself to the ever changing market.

Kou word of mouth. Tour guides should satisfy tourists by honest, enthusiastic, considerate and effective service, getting good reputation and image so as to form good word of mouth in the industry circle. This is essential for a successful tour guide.

Yue planning. Successful tour guides will take precautions and has the good

habit of planning beforehand and summarizing afterwards. Their work is usually methodical and be in an orderly way. So their service could be kept to a high level of effectiveness and quality.

Bei benefit. Successful work is always effective and beneficial. Quality guaranteed tour guide service should create more economical, social as well as ecological benefit for the travel agency and the society.

Fan calm temper. If a tour guide wants to be successful, he must have good psychological quality; he is able to communicate and deal with problems with calm temper; He shouldn't aim too high; he is willing to be ordinary and happy to contribute; he should make extraordinary achievement during the ordinary guiding work.

V. Conclusion

To be a successful tour guide is never easy, which cannot be achieved in one day. It requires that tour guides have the comprehensive qualities and capability of all aspects and practice constantly during guiding work. However, this aim is not too far to reach. So long as tour guides pay attention to learning, accumulating and self training during the ordinary work, the aim of being a successful tour guide is sure to be reached.

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