

Problems and Countermeasures of Tour-Guide Services in Liaoning Province

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Abstract

Tourism of Liaoning Province is developing with a fast speed. High quality services provided by tour guides are necessary for the development of the industry. However, in recent years, the quality and ability of the tour guides in Liaoning Province are both downgrading, and many problems in the process of service are popping up one after another. Therefore, the research into the problems of the tour-guide services in Liaoning Province has great realistic significance.

Key words: Tour-guide service; Satisfaction; Good faith

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1. THE CONCEPT OF TOUR-GUIDE SERVICE

Tour-guide service means tour guides' tour reception services on behalf of the appointed travel agency to receive or accompany tourists in their process of travel or sight-seeing according to the contract of the tour party or

Table 1
Problems About Tour-Guide Services

Options	Amount	Percentage
A.Satisfactory without problem	33	20.4%
B. No tour guide certificate(s)	21	13%
C. Charging tips	36	22.2%
D. Bad service attitude towards tourists	72	44.4%

To be continued

the stipulated contents and criteria. Tour-guide service is the core and linkage of tour reception service as well as an important part of the whole tour service product purchased by tourists.

2. CURRENT SITUATION OF TOUR-GUIDE SERVICES IN LIAONING PROVINCE

2.1 Current Situation of Complaints About Tour-Guide Services

According to the statistics of Liaoning Tourism Quality Supervision Administration, among the 205 complaints of tourism of the whole province in 2011, 64 were about tour-guide services, which have taken up 31.2% of the total amount. Among the 64 complaints, 59 were about tour guides not fulfilling their duties in domestic tours and 5 in overseas tours. The complaints include changing the agenda arbitrarily and disputes about shopping. In Q1 2012, all levels of Tourism Quality Supervision Administration of the whole province (the law enforcement brigade) received altogether 16 complaints of tourism, among which 1 was about tour guide services.

2.2 Investigation About Satisfaction of Tourists

In the midmonth of April 2012, the author investigated about the satisfaction on tour-guide services in Liaoning Province on www.sojump.com. The questions listed in the questionnaire were shown in Table 1 and 2.

Continued

Options	Amount	Percentage
E. Perfunctory about the tour guide job	89	54.9%
F. Forcing tourists to buy things or attend activities at their own expenses	99	61.1%
G. Clichéd introduction to the sights, low professional skills	83	51.2%
H. Ignoring the reasonable requests of tourists	62	38.3%
Total number of effective answers for this question	162	

Table 2
Comments on the Tour-Guide Services in Liaoning Province from Various Aspects

Items/Options	Quite unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Average	Satisfactory	Quite satisfactory
Appropriate appearance of tour guides	9	5	91	53	4
Tour guides are honest and trustworthy	9	15	91	42	5
Tour guides provide guidance and help for shopping for tourists	7	14	90	47	4
Tour guides are able to deal with accidents appropriately	7	10	88	49	8
Tour guides have a wide range of knowledge and are able to answer the questions raised by tourists	7	10	73	66	6
Tour guides are able to provide flexible services according to the requirements of tourists	11	13	87	45	6
Tour guides are good at communication with tourists	8	9	76	62	7
Tour guides can protect the lawful interests of tourists	9	24	81	41	7
General evaluation for tour guide services	6	9	78	65	4

From this investigation, we found that the top three problems of tour-guide services are forcing tourists to buy things or attend activities at their own expenses, perfunctory about the tour guide job and clichéd introduction to the sights due to low professional skills. Meanwhile, most of the evaluation on tour-guide services is “average”, not “satisfactory”, which means there are still many problems existing in the tour-guide services in Liaoning Province. Tour guides should further enhance their services according to the investigation.

3. PROBLEMS OF TOUR-GUIDE SERVICES IN LIAONING PROVINCE

3.1 Low and Unstable Quality of Services

The fast development of tourism in Liaoning Province requires more high quality talents. However, from the reality we have seen and the current situation, there are not many tour guides with higher education background. In order to raise the quality of tour-guide services, it is necessary to add more tour guides with high quality. Though it is not to say that tour guides with low education background cannot provide quality services, actually tour guides who graduated from professional education institutions can put their knowledge learnt in college into practice. To some extent, this will greatly enhance the quality of service.

The low quality tour guides might provide services with unstable quality. When tour guides provide services to tourists, they will encounter all kinds of tour groups such as teachers, elderly people, young people and so on. During the sight-seeing, tour guides can get push money from the sights or shops. Therefore, they will try their best to guide people to buy things or spend money on certain items when providing tour guide services. Probably some tourists are not interested in certain items or shopping, so they won't follow the guidance of the tour guides. Under such circumstances, some tour guides will show bad attitude towards these tourists. In this way, the quality of tour guide services declines sharply. If some groups of tourists let the tour guides get lots of push money during their trip, the tour guides will become extremely hospital and enthusiastic. In some other cases, if the tourists are top-level leaders of an institution, the tour guides will be very careful in providing services and they are usually fully-prepared before the trip. Their service attitude is also extremely good. When the tourists are farmers or people providing basic services to the society, the tour guides will be perfunctory in providing services, making the service quality decline sharply under such circumstances. All the above situations might make the service quality unstable, and tourists may sense the difference of the services they provide.

3.2 Low Moral Baseline and Lacking Good Faith

To some extent, lacking good faith is an important

problem for tourism industry. When travelling, what tourists are most concerned about are whether a travel agency is reliable or not and whether they might be cheated in some way. In building the good faith system of tourism, the good faith of tour guides is very crucial. The good faith of tour guides include many aspects such as whether the tour guides provide services to tourists according to the reception plans and whether they are lured by the devious interests. However, in many real cases, we can see that many tour guides do not have good faith. They cheat the tourists together with the travel agencies and the merchants. In this way, the tourists are not at all respected in the process of travelling. Not long ago, a Ms. Liu took a trip to Shenyang with a tour group. According to the contract, the sights should include the "9·18 Event Memorial Hall". Without getting the consent of the tourists, the tour guide arbitrarily changed the route and took the tourists to go shopping instead of sight-seeing. The tourists later complained about such conducts. The image of tour guides in the eyes of tourists is deteriorating due to their lack of good faith. It might finally affect the whole tourism industry. Therefore, every tour guide should have good faith when providing services.

3.3 Taking Interests at the First Place and Charging Tips at Their Own Will

Many tour guides charge tips from tourists in order to gain interests, which has greatly harmed the image of tour guides. In many foreign countries, the service industry requires guests to pay tips. With the opening up of China, such influence has also come into China and has affected the services of tour guides in China. The tour-guide services become materialized because of the charging of tips, which greatly harmed the moods of tourists. The Liangs from Shenyang altogether had 2 people travelling with a tour group to Beijing for a 5-day trip. The contract stipulates that "the tourists may decide whether to pay tips for the escort service according to the quality of service. The fee should be 10 yuan per day per person." On the evening of the fourth day, after the tourists went to the hotel, the escort-service guide from Shenyang told the tourists that tips were his source of living and that he could not provide very good services if the tourists did not pay him the tips. Then he asked the tourists each to pay the tip of 50 yuan to him. In order not to affect the mood of the escort-service guide as well as the service quality of the trip, the Liangs finally paid the tips to him. When they came back, they felt that the service of the escort-service guide was not satisfactory and there were many problems in his service. However, at that time, they paid the tips because they were afraid it might affect the later trip if they refused him. They complained to the Tourism Quality Supervision Administration about it.

4. COUNTERMEASURES FOR ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF TOUR-GUIDE SERVICES IN LIAONING PROVINCE

4.1 Raising the Requirements for Tour Guides and Emphasizing on Comprehensive Quality

4.1.1 Raising the Requirements for Tour Guide Approval

In many complaints, we can see that many are caused by the low quality of tour guides. Therefore, in order to enhance the quality of tour guides, the requirements of approval should also be changed and adjusted. First, raising the application requirements for the national examination for tour guides. The tourism industry belongs to the service sector. It is an important industry that can promote the development of the economy. The quality of tour guides will influence the development of this industry. According to the statistics of www.cteweb.cn, by the year 2009, there were altogether 68 universities that have tourism major in Liaoning Province. Therefore, they are a great number of talents majored in tourism. Second, the mandarin standard (oral foreign language) for tour guides should be explicitly stipulated. Every year, there should be trainings and examinations on the speechcraft and the explanation techniques of the tour guides. The ability of language expression of tour guides should be emphasized on. The explanation and care of the tour guides for the tourists are all expressed through language. Therefore, the ability of expression should be an important aspect of assessment for tour guides.

4.1.2 Continuous Learning for Tour Guides

The continuous self-improvement of tour guides is another important way to enhance the service quality. Self-improvement is also a good way to enhance the comprehensive quality. Besides the enlarging of range of knowledge through research, training and examinations and learning the necessary knowledge in the travel agencies, tour guides should continuously learn new things and fulfill themselves. The improvement of comprehensive quality cannot be done within one night. It is a long-term process. Tour guides should learn knowledge every day and accumulate knowledge continuously. What's more, they should do a good summary after each job of tour-guide service.

4.2 Establishing Reasonable Salary System and Enhancing Education of Good Faith

Salary is a core issue with which tour guides are most concerned. Reasonable salary system is the best way to stop the "grey income" of tour guides. Therefore, it is crucial to establish and enhance a just and reasonable salary system. The standards for the salary system and

motivation system of tour guides have also become the focus of attention. Unreasonable salary system will greatly harm the enthusiasm of tour guides in providing services and impede the healthy development of the tourism industry. Therefore, establishing a reasonable and effective salary system is good for enhancing the service quality of tour guides. The travel agencies should set the basic salary of tour guides according to their levels and work abilities. The payment should be differentiated according to the professional skills of the tour guides. The basic salaries of tour guides should be determined upon a comprehensive evaluation of the education background, title of the post, work performance, working experience and professional levels of the tour guides. The differences of their income should be enlarged. For the tour guides with good performances, the travel agencies should give them certain bonus after listening to the feedback of tourists so as to encourage them to work harder. Travel agencies may consider to give bonus to tour guides every month. If a tour guide receive a certain amount of positive comments from tourists within a month, he/she should be rewarded by the travel agency. This will promote the enhancement of service quality of tour guides. With such salary system and motivation system, there will be fewer tour guides charging tips from tourists.

As to the good faith of tour guides, travel agencies should give tour guides more education on this issue. In the process of training, the agencies should frequently remind the tour guides to have good faith when providing services, make them understand the importance of good faith of tour guides, the true meaning of good faith and how to have good faith with the tourists.

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