



Unethical Behaviors Faced by Tourist Guides *Ezgi TÜRKMEN*

UNETHICAL BEHAVIORS FACED BY TOURIST GUIDES

ⁱ Ezgi TÜRKMEN 

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ABSTRACT

Tourist guides are considered to be a key element of the tourism industry and perform important tasks such as providing tourists with information about destinations, offering cultural experiences and ensuring their safety. However, this professional group may often face unethical behaviors. Unethical attitudes towards tourist guides can be caused by travel agencies, accommodation companies, tourists and other tourist guides. Unethical behavior can reduce the motivation and performance of tourist guides, negatively affect tourists' destination experience and damage the reputation of the tourism industry. It is of great importance for the development of the tourism sector that tourist guides behave ethically as well as the stakeholders in the tourism sector. In order to encourage tourist guides to work more ethically, measures such as training, supervision mechanisms, better working conditions and the establishment of ethical codes should be taken.

In this study, unethical behaviors that tourist guides are exposed to were tried to be identified and solutions were offered to overcome these problems. The research data were obtained through face-to-face interviews with 12 certified tourist guides residing in the Marmara region. According to the results of the research, sub-dimensions such as acceptance of below-base wages, illegal guiding, not communicating tour cancellations of agencies to tourist guides, not paying for the services provided, stealing a tour by another tourist guide, ideological pressure, and not conducting the necessary inspections frequently enough came to the fore as unethical behaviors encountered by tourist guides.

Keywords: Tourist guiding, ethics, professional ethics

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ⁱ ezgiturkmen@comu.edu.tr



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INTRODUCTION

Today, the tourism sector is recognized as a significant industry worldwide that contributes to economic growth and cultural exchange. Tourists have the opportunity to explore new places and experience local cultures by traveling to different geographies. Tourist guides play a crucial role in enriching and informing these travel experiences. However, unethical behaviors encountered by tourist guides can complicate their role and harm the reputation of the tourism industry (Ap et al., 2001). The functions of tourist guides include providing information about destinations, offering cultural experiences, and ensuring the safety of tourists. Nevertheless, this profession occasionally faces various unethical behaviors. Tourist guides may experience these unethical behaviors from travel agencies, accommodation establishments, tourists, and even their fellow guides. They may be forced to work for low wages, encounter excessive overtime demands, or be unfairly terminated from their jobs. They might also be subjected to rude behavior and threats from tourists. Additionally, they may face unfair competition from other tourist guides (Hussey et al., 2010). This article examines the unethical behaviors faced by tourist guides and provides recommendations on how to address the profession's issues. Various suggestions are presented to empower tourist guides from a professional ethics perspective and to support the tourism industry in becoming more sustainable and reputable. The tourism sector requires tourists, local communities, and tourist guides to adhere to ethical values. Therefore, identifying and addressing the unethical behaviors faced by tourist guides is of great importance for the industry's future.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of ethics is derived from the Greek word "ethos," which signifies the character, traditions, and values of a community or group (Kaplan, 2009). Ethics, based on these values, norms, and judgments, attempts to define concepts such as right and wrong, good and bad. Correct behaviors are generally considered ethical, while incorrect behaviors are deemed unethical. Unethical behaviors are defined as actions that violate commonly accepted behavioral norms (Dündar and Arslantürk, 2022). Ethics is a branch of philosophy that examines the values, norms, rules, and principles that form the foundation of individual and societal relationships. It is also defined as the science that explores the essence and foundations of morality in human behavior (Velez-Restrepo, 2011). Ethics draws from various sources and is based on several fundamental sources (Kultgen, 1988; Brickly et al., 2002; Graham, 2004):

1. **Philosophical Ethics:** Philosophical ethics focuses on developing ethical theories and trying to understand how people make moral decisions. Well-known philosophical ethical theories include deontology (duty ethics), utilitarianism (utility ethics), virtue ethics, and ethics that emphasize rights.
2. **Religion and Morality:** Religions can be primary sources of ethical values and norms. People can derive ethical principles and values from religious texts or teachings.
3. **Social and Cultural Norms:** Societies may have specific ethical values and behavioral norms. These norms are shaped based on the social structure and cultural values of a society.
4. **Law and Regulations:** Law encompasses the laws that reflect the ethical norms and values of society. Laws often define the acceptability or unacceptability of specific behaviors.



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5. **Virtues and Personal Values:** Individuals' personal moral values and virtues are essential factors that shape ethical decision-making.
6. **Professional Ethics Codes:** Various professions have their own ethical codes. Professional ethics defines the standards and ethical requirements of a specific profession.
7. **Historical Experiences and Examples:** Historical events and examples demonstrate how moral values can be shaped and changed. Such experiences can guide future ethical decisions.

Professional ethics encompasses a set of ethical rules and values specific to the practice of a profession. These rules and values are linked to the nature, function, and impact of the profession on society. The aim of professional ethics is for members of a profession to provide honest and fair services to their clients, show respect to their colleagues, manage conflicts of interest, and generally gain the trust of the community (Sazonov, 2001).

In the process of determining professional ethics, all stakeholders and job requirements that will be affected by the practice of a profession should be identified. In Türkiye, rules and ethical principles related to the practice of various professions have been established. The tourism sector is also significant in this context, and various tourism organizations have set ethical standards. Major tourism organizations and their established ethical principles (Yarcan, 2007; Goodpaster, 1989; Nijhof et al., 2003) include:

- United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Global Code of Ethics for Tourism.
- Association of Turkish Travel Agencies (TÜRSAB), General Professional Rules.
- World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA), Code of Conduct for Tourist Guiding.
- European Federation of Tourist Guides (FEG), Quality Agreement.



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Table 1. Basic principles found in the Universal Principles of Tourism Ethics text

<i>Ethical Principles</i>
Tenet 1: Tourism serves mutual understanding and respect between individuals and societies. For this purpose, activities in tourism are based on common ethical values of humanity and are respectful of religious and cultural differences.
Tenet 2: Tourism serves as a means for personal and collective relaxation, entertainment, personal development, and a way to recognize and connect with other cultures.
Tenet 3: Tourism contributes to sustainable development
Tenet 4: Tourism draws upon humanity's shared cultural heritage and endeavors to contribute to its development.
Tenet 5: Tourism serves the benefit of host countries and their people.
Tenet 6: In the host country, individuals and organizations directly and indirectly involved in the production and provision of services (members of the tourism sector, local and central public administrators, and the media) bear responsibilities in the development of tourism.
Tenet 7: Tourism is a right for all global citizens. This right should be evaluated within the framework of the fundamental right to rest and leisure. In this context, all global citizens should have the opportunity to discover and benefit from world resources.
Tenet 8: Freedom of movement principle should be adhered to in tourism circulation.
Tenet 9: The rights of investors and employees in the tourism sector should be recognized and protected.
Tenet 10: Stakeholders in both the private and public sectors within the tourism industry should adopt the Universal Principles of Tourism Ethics and contribute to their effective implementation..

* Tourism Ethics Universal Principles" text is presented by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) under the name "Global Code of Ethics for Tourism" and is available at the following web address

Universal Principles of Tourism Ethics form the foundation of ethical practices in the tourism sector. Professional ethics, on the other hand, play a significant role in ensuring ethical conduct in the business world (Kazimierczak, 2018). Professional ethics guidelines guide ethical behaviors and practices in a workplace by reflecting the values of an industry or business. They serve as a bridge between laws and societal values. However, for these rules to be effective, they must be embraced by all stakeholders. Professional ethics guidelines emphasize the necessity of identifying, examining, and reflecting general ethical values in addressing issues (Fennel, 2015). Tourist guiding is a profession that is a crucial component of the tourism industry. Its fundamental purpose is to provide tourists with information, guidance, and cultural experiences, and ensure their safety during travel. Tourist guides take on various responsibilities, such as leading tourist groups, introducing historical and cultural sites, organizing activities, and meeting the needs of tourists (Yenen, 2002). In the Tourism Guiding Profession Law No. 6326, a tourist guide is defined as a person who, without engaging in travel agency activities, is authorized and responsible for conducting tours by introducing the cultural, tourism, history, environment, nature, social, or similar values of the country by the culture and tourism policies of the country, using the language selected by individual or group domestic or foreign tourists before the trip, and by the travel program of tours organized by travel agencies as defined in their written documents and managed on behalf of the agency' (Official Gazette, 2014).



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A tourist guide goes beyond the role of merely providing information; they serve as a bridge between cultures, and as such, they should have a thorough understanding not only of their own native language, culture, and history but also of the language, culture, and history of the tourists they guide. The success of information delivery by guides depends on factors such as tourists' educational levels, levels of interest, travel history, prior knowledge, and interest in the tour (Değirmencioğlu, 2001). Tourist guides need to possess a wide range of knowledge and skills while serving both domestic and foreign tourists. This profession operates within a dynamic structure that requires continuous communication with all stakeholders in the tourism industry. This important role makes tourist guides the communication center for many individuals and institutions. Among the responsibilities that come with this role, is the requirement for tourist guides to adhere to ethical rules (Çokal and Yılmaz, 2020).

The World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA) has outlined the professional ethical rules that tourist guides should adhere to (WFTGA, 2022):

1. When providing professional guiding services to tourists, perform their duties with enthusiasm and dedication; and present destinations and countries impartially, avoiding biases and negative propaganda.
2. Differentiate consciously between stories, epics, myths, traditions, and facts when conveying information.
3. Establish strong communication with colleagues and other stakeholders in the tourism industry, and make fair decisions.
4. Encourage tour groups to respect the ecological, natural, cultural, and historical environment during guided tours; also, ensure that they show respect for local values and contribute to the development of the destination's image.
5. As representatives of the visited country during tourism travel, welcome tourists and promote the country and destination with a high international reputation.

METHOD

The aim of this study is to identify the unethical behaviors experienced by tourist guides and provide solutions to these issues. The data collection method used in this research is explained in this section. In this study, a qualitative research method was applied to obtain detailed information about tourist guides. The data was collected using a semi-structured questionnaire technique. The interview form consists of two parts. The first part includes 8 interview questions to gather information about the unethical behaviors encountered by tourist guides. The second part includes questions to collect information about the gender, age ranges, educational backgrounds, types of work permits, employment methods, methods of practicing the profession, and monthly average earnings of the individuals to be interviewed. The participant group of the research consists of 12 active tourist guides residing in the Marmara Region. The data was obtained from interviews conducted in August - October 2019. Each tourist guide interviewed was coded as R1, R2 ... R12. To increase the internal validity of the study, direct quotations from the expressions of tourist guides have been included.



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FINDINGS

In this section of the research, the analysis and interpretations of the data collected with the aim of revealing the unethical behaviors experienced by tourist guides are presented.

Participants' Socio-Demographic and Profile Characteristics according to Table 2, 8% of tourist guides are in the 21-25 age range, 16% are in the 26-30 age range, 16% are in the 31-35 age range, 41% are in the 36-40 age range, 8% are in the 41-45 age range, and 8% are in the 46-50 age range. 66% of tourist guides are male, and 33% are female guides. 8% of tourist guides have completed their associate's degrees, 66% have bachelor's degrees, and 24% have completed postgraduate education. 24% of tourist guides have regional work permits, and 74% have national work permits. 83% of tourist guides consider this profession as their main job, while 16% work in it as a side job. 91% of tourist guides work independently, while 8% are employed by a travel agency. 8% of tourist guides earn monthly average incomes in the range of 3,000-4,999 TL, 58% earn incomes in the range of 5,000-6,999 TL, 8% earn incomes in the range of 7,000-8,999 TL, 16% earn over 9,000 TL in monthly average income, and 8% did not specify their monthly average income.

Table 2. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variables		
Gender	n	%
Male	8	66,4
Female	4	33,2
Total	12	100
Age	n	%
21-25 age group	1	8,3
26-30 age group	2	16,6
31-35 age group	2	16,6
36-40 age group	5	41,5
41-45 age group	1	8,3
46-50 age group	1	8,3
Total	12	100
Education Level	n	%
Associate's Degree	1	8,3
Bachelor's Degree	8	66,4
Postgraduate Degree	3	24,9
Total	12	100
Type of Work Permit	n	%
Regional	3	24,9
National	9	74,7
Total	12	100
Type of Employment	n	%
Main Job	10	83
Side Job	2	16,6
Total	12	100
Method of Practicing the Profession	n	%
Freelance	11	91,3
Affiliated with a Travel Agency	1	8,3
Total	12	100
Monthly Average Income	n	%
3,000 - 4,999 TL	1	8,3
5,000 - 6,999 TL	7	58,1
7,000 - 8,999 TL	1	8,3
9,000 TL and above	2	16,6
Not specified	1	8,3
Total	12	100



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Table 3 codes each interviewed tourist guide as R1, R2, ... R12. The table provides detailed profiles of tourist guides, including their gender, age, monthly average income, education level, type of work permit, employment method, and method of practicing the profession.

Table 3. Profiles of Interviewed Tourist Guides

<i>Code</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Age Monthly Average Income (TL)</i>	<i>Education Level</i>	<i>Type of Work Permit</i>	<i>Employment Method</i>	<i>Method of Practicing the Profession</i>
R1	Male	24	4.500.-	Bachelor's Degree	National	Affiliated with a Travel Agency	Main Job
R2	Male	32	10.000.-	Associate's Degree	National	Freelance	Main Job
R3	Female	34	5.500.-	Bachelor's Degree	National	Freelance	Main Job
R4	Female	36	6.000.-	Bachelor's Degree	National	Freelance	Main Job
R5	Male	27	5.000.-	Bachelor's Degree	National	Freelance	Main Job
R6	Male	29	9.500.-	Bachelor's Degree	National	Freelance	Main Job
R7	Female	40	*	Lisansüstü	Regional	Freelance	Main Job
R8	Female	39	6.500	Bachelor's Degree	Regional	Freelance	Secondary Job
R9	Male	37	6.500.-	Bachelor's Degree	National	Freelance	Main Job
R10	Male	37	7.500.-	Bachelor's Degree	National	Freelance	Main Job
R11	Male	42	6.000.-	Postgraduate Degree	National	Freelance	Secondary Job
R12	Male	50	5.500.-	Postgraduate Degree	Regional	Freelance	Main Job

* Tourist Guides' Evaluations of Unethical Behaviors Experienced Due to Contracted Travel Agencies

Table 4 includes the codes and themes that emerged from the analysis of interviews in which tourist guides expressed the unethical behaviors they had experienced from the travel agencies they had contracted with.



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Table 4. Tourist Guides' Views on Unethical Behaviors Encountered from Contracted Travel Agencies

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Sub-Themes</i>	<i>Codes</i>
1-Unethical Behaviors Due to Contracted Travel Agencies	1.1. Payment 1.2. Information 1.3. Intervention 1.4. Belief and Age	Payment Subpar payment (5) Late payment (1) Non-compliance with the contract (2) Non-payment (1) Presentation of payment (1) Information Failure to notify tour cancellation (6) Failure to notify guide change (3) Intervention Tour program (6) Seat allocation (5) Belief and Age (1) Headscarf-wearing and elderly (1)

The evaluations of tourist guides regarding unethical behaviors stemming from contracted travel agencies are categorized into three sub-themes. Among the codings conducted in the fee sub-theme, the most frequently mentioned code is "subpar payment" (5). One tourist guide mentioned "late payment" (1), and another used the term "non-compliance with the contract" (2), while one mentioned "non-payment," and another mentioned "presentation of payment."

Within the information sub-theme, the most frequently mentioned codes are "failure to notify tour cancellation" (6) and "failure to notify guide change" (3). The third sub-theme, belief and age, contains only one coding.

Here are some statements from tourist guides regarding unethical behaviors they have encountered from contracted travel agencies:

R3: "I have experienced unethical behaviors such as the non-fulfillment of the promised payment. Additionally, agencies offering payments below the ministry's daily rates and canceling a previously confirmed tour at the last minute."

R6: "Although I have a daily contract, I faced interference with the tour program prepared by the agency, and at the end of the tour, the agency representative tried to make a subpar payment, stating in front of the group that I did not comply with the program and accusing me of incomplete work. Thanks to my good communication with the group, I managed to turn the unfavorable conditions in my favor and received the base payment."

R7: "I worked without any problems for 5 years in Trabzon, but when I came to Çanakkale, finding a job became difficult, and the attitudes of the agencies changed. In the first year, I worked with an agency, but I had to wait 8 months to get my salary. I went on a tour in the Black Sea region with another company, but I struggled to satisfy the customers with constant program changes. Additionally, when I sent my work permit, some canceled due to the age or headscarf of the guides, and I found myself in a difficult situation when I went to greet the tour in Istanbul, learning that another guide had been assigned."



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R11: "There have been times when I couldn't get my payment on time. Some agency owners or operations staff think they are doing a favor by giving me a job. We frequently encounter agencies that complain about the excess of payment given to guides."

Evaluations of Tourist Guides Regarding Unethical Behaviors Stemming from Accommodation Facilities

Table 5 presents the codes and themes resulting from the analysis of the interviews where tourist guides expressed unethical behaviors originating from the accommodation facilities where they worked.

Table 5. Tourist Guides' Evaluations Regarding Unethical Behaviors Stemming from Accommodation Facilities

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Codes</i>
2- Unethical Behaviors Stemming from Accommodation Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Misleading information (1)• Threat (1)• Fake reservation cancellation (1)• Room merging (2)• Providing poor and faulty rooms (4)• Wake-up call violation (1)• Discrimination based on nationality (1)• Rudeness (1)

Tourist guides' evaluations regarding unethical behaviors originating from accommodation facilities have not been categorized into subthemes. From the assessments of twelve different tourist guides, eight distinct codes have emerged. (4) tourist guides' statements have been coded as providing poor and faulty rooms, while (2) tourist guides' statements have been coded as room consolidation. The statements of other tourist guides have been coded as deceptive information, threats, fake reservation cancellations, wake-up call violations, discrimination based on nationality, and unprofessional behavior.

Here are some statements from tourist guides about unethical behaviors originating from accommodation facilities:

R1: "Years ago, at a hotel in Gelibolu Hamzakoy, guests were given a safe deposit box, and later they were told that it was chargeable, and I was subjected to psychological pressure to handle it."

R4: "I attempted to be frightened by a hotel owner due to the agency not making the hotel payment."

R6: "Despite having reservations at hotels, issues like reservation cancellations, room consolidation tricks, etc., have occurred."

R8: "In Ayvalık, I was forced to stay in a room that didn't even have a window. It was very ruthless to put me in a room with no air conditioning on a summer day and expect service the next day."

R10: "The front desk clerk in some places doesn't take wake-up calls seriously..."

Evaluations of Tourist Guides Regarding Ethical Misconduct by Colleagues



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In Table 6, the codes and themes resulting from the analysis of interviews in which tourist guides express their assessments of unethical behaviors originating from their colleagues are presented.

Table 6. Tourist Guides' Views on Ethical Misconduct Experienced from Colleagues

Themes	Sub-Themes	Codes
"3.Unethical Behaviors Originating from Colleagues in the Practice of the Profession"	6.1. Work-Related Negative Behavior 6.2. Personality Disorder-Related Negative Behavior"	Work-Related Negative Behavior Tour stealing (4) Tour passing (1) Working below the base (5) Accepting the hostess seat (1) Sharing confidential information (1) Negative Behavior Related to Personality Disorders Selfishness (1) Disrespect (4) Insult (1) Cutting in line (2) Not keeping promises (1) Gossip (1) Arrogance (1) Slander (1)

The evaluations of tourist guides regarding unethical behaviors originating from their colleagues have been grouped into two sub-themes. Under the sub-theme of negative behavior related to the profession, the most frequently repeated code is "working under the minimum fee" (5). The second most repeated code is "stealing tours" (4). The expressions of one tourist guide each have been coded as "passing off tours," "accepting the hostess seat," and "sharing confidential information." In the sub-theme of negative behavior related to personality disorders, the most frequently repeated codes include "disrespect" (4), "cutting in line" (2), "selfishness" (1), "insult" (1), "not keeping promises" (1), "gossip" (1), "arrogance" (1), and "slander" (1).

Here are some statements from tourist guides regarding unethical behaviors originating from their colleagues:

R5: "For a certain agency, and I won't mention their name, during the Alaçatı Food Festival, there are guides who, despite the daily wage being, for example, 380 TL + VAT/Tax during that time, are willing to go from Istanbul to Alaçatı and back for 300 TL, sitting in the hostess seat of the bus. This person is even involved in room management now!"

R8: "I was subjected to insults from the former chairman of the board."

R11: "I've seen many cases where one of my colleagues tried to take another colleague's tour by offering a lower price. Or, for a better deal, they would ditch the agency they promised and take another tour, causing harm to the first agency."

R3: "One of the biggest problems among tourist guides is competition and negative competitive behaviors among colleagues. For instance, one guide might try to outbid another guide's offer to get the job for a lower fee or spread rumors about colleagues. Additionally, problems can arise among



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guides trying to belittle their colleagues for the sake of ego satisfaction. Such behaviors can create a negative atmosphere among many guides in the industry."

Tourist Guides' Evaluations Regarding Unethical Behaviors Exhibited by Narrated Guests

Table 7 presents the codes and themes that emerged from the analysis of interviews in which tourist guides expressed unethical behaviors exhibited by the guests they were narrating to..

Table 7. Tourist Guides' Opinions Regarding Ethically Unacceptable Behaviors Experienced from Guests They Were Narrating To

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Codes</i>
4-Ethically Unacceptable Behaviors from Guests to Whom You Are Narrating	Ideological pressure (2) Inappropriateness (1) Non-listening (4) Intervention in narration (3) Arrogance (1) Theft (1) Open searching (1) Incitement of the group (1) Incompatibility (1) Disrespect (2)

Subthemes could not be defined for tourist guides' evaluations regarding unethical behaviors exhibited by customers during narrations. Analysis of the statements made by tourist guides revealed ten different codes within this theme. When the most frequently recurring codes within this theme are examined, it is observed that they include inattention (4), intervention in narration (3), ideological pressure (2), disrespect (2), arrogance (1), theft (1), open searching (1), harassment (1), incitement of the group (1), and non-compliance (1).

Here are some statements from tourist guides regarding unethical behaviors exhibited by narrating guests:

R2: "This has happened to our guides at least once, especially in our region. We have gained experience in dealing with ideological or complex behaviors. The worst incident was when a woman from the group showed closeness to me in front of everyone, and wanted to come to my room at the hotel in the evening. When I refused, she complained to the agency responsible the next day, saying that the guide had approached her. Neither the group nor the agency took her complaint seriously, but as soon as I heard about it, I found another guide to take my place and left the tour."

R11: "Among the guests I have taken on tours, there have been incidents where they did not pay for the meal or the items they bought at the restaurant or shopping point where we received service, or they refused to pay for a damaged item. There were guests who, when I did not comply with their wishes, took an attitude, tried to provoke other guests against the guide unnecessarily, and engaged in arguments over trivial matters or assumed an openly confrontational stance towards the guide."

R13: "Most of the time, during cultural tours, I encounter guests who have come not to learn or obtain information, but solely to take photos and share them on social media. They do not listen to the guide during the narration, constantly take photos, move away from the group, and distract the guide by talking to someone else while the guide is speaking. Sometimes, even late in the day, when



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there is an issue at the hotel where they are staying that could be resolved with the reception, they call the guide, disturb them, and believe that the guide is obligated to provide service 24 hours a day."

R9: "Although it can be quite generalized depending on their nationalities, if your guests are locals, they sometimes include you in the tour price. It is quite common for them to treat you as their personal employee or servant."

General Thoughts on Ethical Misconduct Encountered by Tourist Guides and Their Evaluations Regarding Additional Issues to Address

Table 8 presents the codes and themes that emerged from the analysis of interviews in which tourist guides expressed their general experiences with unethical behavior, as well as their thoughts on additional issues to address.

Table 8. Tourist Guides' Evaluations Regarding Unethical Behaviors Generally Encountered and Additional Points They Wish to Address in Regards to Unethical Behaviors

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Sub-Themes</i>	<i>Codes</i>
5. Thoughts on Unethical Behaviors Generally Encountered by Tourist Guides and Additional Points They Wish to Address	<i>8.1. Behaviors Experienced by Colleagues</i>	Behaviors Experienced by Colleagues Disrespect (5) Payment problems (3) General moral issue (3) Working without a contract (2) Coercion (2) Sabotage of the tour (2) Illegal guiding (2) Last-minute tour cancellations (1)
	<i>8.2. Recommendations</i>	Advices Professional solidarity and stability (4) Accurate promotion of the profession (3) Taking the profession seriously (1) Being prepared for surprises (1) New legislative regulations (1) Chamber/Union support (1) Sector-specific training (1)

Tourist guides' general thoughts on unethical behaviors they commonly face and their recommendations are grouped under two sub-themes. The coding conducted falls under the sub-theme of behaviors that colleagues experience. In this sub-theme, the most frequently recurring code is disrespect (5). The other two frequently recurring codes are payment issues (3) and general ethical problems (3). These are followed by codes such as underground work (2), coercion (2), and sabotage of tours (2). The expressions of the tourist guide are coded as clandestine guiding (2), working without a contract (1), and tour cancellations (1). In this section, the coding conducted falls under the sub-theme of recommendations. When the most frequently recurring codes in this sub-theme are examined, professional solidarity and stability (4) are expressed most frequently, followed by the



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correct promotion of the profession (3). Other recommendations include taking the profession seriously (1), being prepared for surprises (1), new regulatory arrangements (1), chamber/union support (1), and sector-specific training (1).

In general, here are some statements from tourist guides regarding their thoughts on unethical behaviors they commonly face and the aspects they want to add:

R1: "It's a big test for every new group tourist guide; you never know when and what you'll encounter."

R3: "My colleagues often complain about issues such as last-minute tour cancellations, not being able to receive their fees despite having contracts, not receiving fees for transfers and night tour services, and not being able to receive the full ministry fee. I believe my colleagues should be more in solidarity and act consistently in such matters."

R5: "I often think it's unjust. In some cases, there are problems caused by the guides themselves, such as not making contracts or making payments on behalf of an unfamiliar agency and not being able to collect it. In such cases, the safest step for guides would be to secure themselves legally. In the incident where a fellow guide was beaten in front of Topkapi Palace, the association he was affiliated with refused to allocate a lawyer."

R12: "In the tourism sector, as in any other sector, some businesses respect ethical and moral values while others can be careless about it. For example, some agencies may re-sell seats that have already been sold to customers or neglect to check the guides' equipment. Problems such as lack of care for guides and captains in restaurants, or allocation of low-standard rooms in hotels, can also be seen as amateurish behaviors. Additionally, in some shopping spots where guides make high-volume sales to their groups, unethical situations can occur where the guides do not receive their fair share in return. Some guides may also be dishonest in passing tours between groups, which can be seen as a contributing factor to the disconnect in the sector."

CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

Tourism represents a vast industry where millions of people travel and explore new destinations worldwide. The tourism sector is a significant source of economic growth, cultural exchange, and interpersonal interaction. Tourist guides play an essential role in this dynamic industry, helping tourists have experiences and travel safely while introducing them to historical, and cultural riches, natural beauty, and other fascinating places. This profession involves continuous communication with all stakeholders in the tourism industry, making tourist guides a central point of contact for many individuals and organizations, accompanied by a range of responsibilities.

Due to the importance of the profession of tourist guiding in tourism, it has been the subject of many academic studies. Although there has been an increasing interest in studies related to the ethics of the tourist guiding profession in recent years, it has been determined that publications in this field are limited. Researchers have often preferred to measure the ethical behavior of tourist guides through the perspective of tourists. This tendency shows that researchers generally focus on tourists when assessing the ethical behavior of tourist guides (İlhan et al., 2023). This research is believed to contribute to the literature by addressing the unethical behaviors encountered by tourist guides themselves.

Based on the data obtained in the study, it was determined that the most striking issue in the assessments of tourist guides regarding unethical behaviors originating from contracted travel agencies was generally the non-payment of sub-base fees. In addition to this issue, behaviors such as travel agencies not informing tourist guides about tour cancellations, delayed payments for the



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services provided, and payments often being made through unofficial methods were also expressed. Furthermore, non-compliance with contracts, failure to notify about changes in guides and non-payment for the services provided were identified as unethical behaviors. The results obtained are similar to other studies in the literature (Türkmen & Deniz, 2022; Güzel, 2007; Güzel et al., 2014; Pelit & Katircioğlu, 2018; Köroğlu et al., 2007).

In the evaluations of tourist guides regarding unethical behaviors originating from accommodation facilities, the following issues were identified in order of intensity: allocation of poor and faulty rooms, room consolidation (driver-guide), providing deceptive/incomplete information, threats, fake reservation cancellations, violation of wake-up calls, discrimination based on nationality, and rudeness (Olçay, Özkan & Göçebeler, 2018; Dündar & Arslantürk, 2022).

In the evaluations of tourist guides regarding unethical behaviors originating from colleagues, comments were evaluated under the subheadings of negative behaviors related to business and personality disorders. The comments were classified as follows in order of intensity: acceptance of sub-base fees, theft of tours by another tourist guide, passing off a tour, traveling in the hostess seat, and sharing confidential information. Expressions identified as negative behaviors related to personality disorders included disrespect, jumping the queue, selfishness, insult, gossip, arrogance, and slander (Türkmen & Deniz, 2022; Kılıçhan, 2019; Zengin et al., 2017).

In the evaluations of tourist guides regarding unethical behaviors originating from customer behaviors, the comments emphasized non-listening, intervention in speech, ideological pressure, disrespect, arrogance, theft, open searching, harassment, incitement of the group, and non-conformity (Dündar & Arslantürk, 2022; Yagil, 2008).

Tourist guides generally expressed the following unethical behaviors: disrespect, payment problems, a general lack of ethics, sub-base work, coercion, sabotage of tours, unregistered guiding, working without contracts, and last-minute tour cancellations. During the interviews, one of the significant professional problems of tourist guides was identified as the infrequency of necessary inspections and the inability to control unauthorized guiding activities. It was noted that inspections were intensified during busy tourist seasons and on special holidays, but almost no inspections were conducted during quiet periods, which hindered the prevention of unauthorized guiding activities (Zengin et al., 2017; Kılıçhan, 2019; Eser & Şahin, 2020; Çakmak, 2020).

In this research, the difficulties faced by tourist guides in terms of professional ethics were examined, and significant results were presented. Based on the research results, some suggestions have been identified: Tourist guides should receive training on professional ethics and these training programs should be regularly updated. Moreover, seminars and workshops should be organized to increase the awareness of tourist guides about ethical issues. Tourist guides should collaborate more closely with their employers and travel agencies. Businesses should encourage guides to adhere to professional ethical rules. In addition, mechanisms for control and complaint against unethical behaviors can be established. All stakeholders can adopt the existing regulations to ensure compliance with the general ethical values of the sector. More equitable employment conditions should be created for tourist guides. Wages should be paid on time, and working conditions should be improved.



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