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Swimming in dangerous waters: A phenomenological study of the risk management of tour guides¹

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to explore the risk management experiences of tour guides by using a phenomenological approach. Tour guiding involves providing historical and cultural information, managing complex human interactions, ensuring safety, and overcoming logistical challenges. The study adopts a phenomenological approach to explore the experiences of 19 active tour guides in Eskişehir who are registered with the Ankara Chamber of Tour Guides. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed using descriptive and content analysis. Four main themes emerged: Challenges of the tour guiding profession, preparation before the tour, risks before the tour, and risks during the tour. The findings highlight that risk management strategies are critical to ensuring both guest satisfaction and guide well-being. Tour guides emphasize the importance of flexibility, crisis management skills, and proactive planning. This study contributes to the existing literature by providing insights into the real on-site experiences of tour guides and by offering actionable recommendations for improving risk management training. Safety standards and the guest experience can be significantly enhanced by improving tour guides' preparedness. Therefore, this study contributes to the current body of knowledge as it offers a framework for risk management of tour guides, tour guides' relevant solutions and strategies. Finally, it provides recommendations for theorists, practitioners, and other researchers. It is essential to address the underlying cause of the problem in order to resolve the situation effectively. When a risk is identified, it is crucial to remain calm and seek the most efficient and optimal solution.

KEYWORDS

Risk management, tour guiding profession, challenges of tour guide, risks during the tour

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of tourism is typically associated with notions of pleasure and leisure. As in all areas of life, there are risk factors in the tourism sector. By its very nature, tourism presents many types of risk and is affected by many different issues. Risk is often perceived as an inherent adversity to be circumvented or, at the very least, as an underlying potential threat. While risk may occasionally detract from the experiences and, in some cases, the lives of individual tourists, it is not a central aspect of tourism. Indeed, risk is seen as the antithesis of pleasure, and mass pleasure tourism is predicated on the apparent absence of risk. With the globalization of the world, crises affect not only the regions where they occur but also the whole world. Sectors such as tourism, which have both a global structure and a delicate balance, are quickly affected by security, environmental, political, and economic crises (Yetgin, Yılmaz & Çiftçi, 2018).

Tour guides are professional tourism workers who provide professional support to tourists, make informative explanations about the visited place, guide them, and stay in contact with tourists the most in tour programs (Kavak, Emir & Arslantürk, 2024a, p. 60). Guiding is a dynamic profession that involves not only the transmission of historical and cultural information but also complex human interactions, safety management, and logistical organization. Tour guides have several responsibilities, such as managing tourists' experiences, providing information, and ensuring their safety while at the same time promoting tourist destinations. One of these responsibilities is to manage the risks that guides face (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2005). Situations such as incoming tourists not wanting to leave the hotel due to security reasons, not participating in cultural tours, cancellation of cultural tours in Turkey by tour operators abroad, and lack of travel insurance affect the service area of tour guides more. For this reason, compared to the number of tourists coming to the country for sea-sand-sun, it is thought that the target group served by tour guides is lower. A tour's quality depends on the guide's ability to give an expert interpretation, perform well, and transfer their knowledge to the group (Kalyoncu & Yükses, 2020). All these situations have a negative impact on tour guides, and they can even lead to unemployment and economic difficulties. This means a tour guide who cannot perform their job must consider economic concerns (Yetgin & Benligiray, 2019; Kaya, Yetgin Akgün & Çiftçi, 2020). Tour guides, as professionals who communicate directly with visitors and guide them throughout the tour, have had to adapt to change in this sector where the use of new technologies has become widespread (Kavak, Emir and Arslantürk, 2024b, p. 1410). Tour guiding is, by its very nature, a field full of uncertainty and variability, and guides are likely to encounter unexpected situations at any time (Baum, 2006). In this context, the risk management skills of tour guides stand out as a factor that directly affects their professional success. Tour guides manage risks from accidents, health emergencies, and natural disasters. Effective response plans and partnerships with local authorities are crucial in mitigating these risks (Cohen, 1985; Wang & Chen, 2019). Otherwise, the guide's aggressive behavior in a difficult situation could undermine their overall positive qualities (Kalyoncu & Yükses, 2017, p. 16).

Risks can come in many different forms in tour guiding. Physical hazards, problems in group dynamics, efforts to meet tourists' expectations, and environmental factors are common challenges that guides face daily (Mason, 2015). Additionally, risk is accepted in such a crisis because of its process. Crisis management is not only an activity that covers the period after a crisis. In this context, crisis management also includes activities that need to be carried out in the period until the emergence of the crisis, such as identifying warning signals and establishing protection and prevention mechanisms (Koroğlu, 2004). In particular, the hazards that guides face are not only limited to direct physical harm, but they are also exposed to psychological pressures, time management stress, and the expectations of individuals within the group and tour guiding profession, including lack of job security (Pearce, 2011; Nyahunzvi & Njerekai, 2013). Furthermore, the challenges that guides face in carrying out their work are related to individual experiences as well as the overall dynamics of the tourism sector. Relationships with government agencies, tourism companies, and other stakeholders are critical external factors that shape guides' risk management strategies and decisions. Boksberger et al. (2007) examined risk perception in commercial air travel, identifying six specific perceived risk dimensions: financial risk, functional risk, physical risk, psychological risk, social risk, and temporal risk.

This study aims to determine tour guides' risk management experiences and how these experiences help them cope with the challenges they face in their profession. It also aims to contribute to training programs in the sector by providing new insights into tour guides' strategic and operational practices in their profession. A better understanding of guides' ability to manage risk can contribute to their professional development and the tourism sector's safety standards. In this context, the research findings can provide recommendations for industry professionals and tour guide candidates to manage the risks tour guides face more effectively. This study contributes to previous research on the tour-guiding profession and provides a new perspective on the practical strategies tour guides develop to deal with their challenges (Pearce, 2011). Filling the gaps in the literature in this area and developing practical strategies to manage the risks tour guides face better should be a shared goal of professionals and researchers in the field.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is thought that the word "risk" came into our language from the Greek word "*rhiza*," meaning rocky. The word "*rhiza*," expressing danger, was transferred to Italian as "risco" and from there to English as 'risk.' In Turkish, it was first used as "riziko" but later as 'risk.' "Risk" can be defined as "the probability of occurrence of an event that may result in damage or loss" (Çetinsöz & Ege, 2013). While risk is a known possibility, uncertainty does not have a known probability. Risk is a calculable and predictable situation, and its effects can be managed. While we have certain information in risk situations, it can be said that uncertainty usually arises due to a lack of information (Karamustafa & Erbaş, 2011, p. 108). Risk is a phenomenon of life. Individuals must take action and make decisions in the face of risk, but taking risks may lead to unexpected and undesirable results (Çetinsöz & Ege, 2013).

Despite the challenging circumstances, the tourism industry can minimize disruptions and facilitate a swift return to normal operations through effective risk management (Ural, 2015). The first step in effective risk management in tourism is the identification of potential risks. The next step is to assess the risks identified and assign responsibilities. Once the possible risks in tourism have been identified, measures can be taken to minimize their impact. Regular reviews and monitoring of all actions are essential for effective risk management. Furthermore, all stakeholders involved in tourism safety should be trained to identify, analyze, assess, and respond to risks and to monitor, review, and communicate with stakeholders at every stage of the process (Payam, 2020).

Pioneering studies, such as those by Roehl and Fesenmaier (1992), categorized tourism risks into physical-equipment, holiday, and destination risks. Recent research has expanded these categories to include financial, psychological, social, and temporal risks (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007; Wang & Chen, 2019). Fuchs and Reichel (2006) investigated the destination risk perception of foreign tourists in Israel. Their study identified six risk perception factors: human-induced, financial, service quality, social-psychological, food safety problems and weather, and natural disasters and car accident risks. Tour guides, as frontline workers, face unique risks stemming from their direct interaction with tourists and the operational demands of their profession (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2005).

Risk management is a comprehensive process that begins with the identification of risks and continues with their assessment, the determination of responsible individuals and units, the selection of risk transfer methods, the implementation of these methods, the monitoring of the risks, and the evaluation of the process (Akkoç, 2020). It can be defined as the careful and detailed definition of potential risks and implementing measures to minimize or eliminate them. This process involves preventing losses and maximizing the benefits of the tourist experience. However, the strategies that guides use to manage risk have not been sufficiently explored in the literature. How guides respond to the risks they face and which internal and external factors are effective in this process are not fully understood (Mason, 2015). Therefore, understanding the risk management experiences of tour guides is an important area of research for both the academic literature and professional practice. As the tour's leader, the tour guide has much to do before, during and after the tour. Being a tour guide is a different job in the tourism sector because of its nature. The tour guide is not only a service provider but also the leader of the tourist. The tour

guide profession is perceived as simply providing information to tourists. However, the profession encompasses a wide range of roles that go beyond superficial tasks. Koroğlu (2012) found that several factors contribute to the preference of the tour guiding profession among the younger generation. These include the elevated risk of unemployment and job insecurity, the lengthy working hours, the extensive travel, and the increased prevalence of health issues with age. Tour guides act as interpreters of culture, facilitators of experiences, and mediators between tourists and destinations (Cohen, 1985). Tour guides not only act as guides during the trip but also have the role of 'special diplomats' who can communicate professionally (Yüksek, Coşkun and Günay Aktaş, 2017). Risk management encompasses all the strategies that guides develop to deal with this diversity of risks

Tour guides are key actors in the tourism industry, acting as facilitators, mediators, and risk managers. Their responsibilities go beyond providing information, as they ensure the safety and well-being of tourists while managing different types of risks, such as physical, cultural, environmental, and social (Cohen, 1985; Ap & Wong, 2001). Cultural misunderstandings can affect the tourist experience and damage the relationship between the host and the community. Tour guides act as cultural mediators, ensuring respectful and appropriate interactions between tourists and local cultures (Ap & Wong, 2001; Huang & Weiler, 2010). Risks can be managed in various ways, including direct interaction with tourists. Therefore, Effective communication is crucial for managing risks during tours. Previous research has identified several communication skills, including the ability to maintain a sense of humor, eye contact, compliance with tourists, the use of body language, and courtesy to group members as key determinants of tour guides' performance in providing a satisfactory tour experience for tourists (Sezgin & Düz, 2018). In ecotourism and adventure tourism, guides are responsible for minimizing environmental degradation. They promote sustainable practices such as waste management and adherence to ecological guidelines (Black & Ham, 2005; Weiler & Black, 2015). Managing group dynamics, resolving conflicts, and addressing inappropriate tourist behavior is essential to maintaining a positive group atmosphere and avoiding social disruption (Zhang & Chow, 2004; Tarlow, 2006).

Tour guides must possess the qualifications required by their profession, address any current deficiencies, and engage in continuous professional development. The absence of the requisite qualifications among guides results in a reduction in the quality of service and an increase in customer complaints (Düz, 2017). Professional training increases the capacity of tour guides to manage risks. Programs that focus on crisis management and emergency response improve preparedness (Ap & Wong, 2001; Weiler & Walker, 2014). Mobile applications, GPS tracking, and other technologies enable tour guides to communicate effectively and respond quickly in emergencies (Leung et al., 2013; Xiang et al., 2021). Pre-tour briefings, risk assessments, and the development of contingency plans are standard practices that increase tourist safety and satisfaction (Huang & Weiler, 2010; Tarlow, 2006). Tour guides often face stress and uncertainty in risk scenarios. Building psychological resilience through support systems and training is increasingly recognized as critical (Cohen et al., 2002; Wang and Chen., 2019). Tour guides explore the integration of risk management technologies, the role of emotional intelligence in crisis scenarios, and comparative studies on risk management practices across different cultural contexts (Weiler & Walker, 2014; Xiang et al., 2021). This study builds on previous research by focusing on the lived experiences of tour guides in managing risks. It addresses gaps in the literature by providing a more detailed understanding of how guides navigate complex challenges and pre-tour and during-tour risks, intending to contribute to the existing body of knowledge in this field.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

While preparing the data collection tool, questions were adapted from studies on perceived risk, risk management, and the challenges of the tour guiding profession (Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992; Sheng-Hsiung, Gwo-Hsiung and Kuo-Ching, 1997; Reisinger & Mavondo, 2005; Nyahunzvi & Njerekai, 2013). Then, the opinions of four experts in the fields of tourism

management and tour guiding were consulted. The questions in the form, in which the necessary arrangements were made in line with the expert opinions, are as follows:

- How old are you? What is your language of tour guiding? How long have you been working actively as a tour guide?
- What are the challenges of tour guiding profession that affect you?
- What preparations do you make before you go on tour?
- What risks might you face before you go on tour? Do you take any precautions against these risks?
- What risks do you encounter during the tour? How do you eliminate the risks you come across during the tour?

This study adopts a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of tour guides regarding risk management. Phenomenology enables researchers to understand how individuals perceive and interpret specific phenomena (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, the aim of the phenomenological design is not to generalize but to define the reality of the phenomena (Akturan & Esen, 2013, pp. 84-85; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013, p. 78). The ethics committee permission required to collect the data used in this study was obtained from the Anadolu University Ethics Committee with protocol number 56806. The research was conducted in Eskişehir, which has a unique character and features, such as historical buildings, green parks, and convenient local transportation, making it a popular destination for domestic and foreign travelers. Before the interview, each participant was provided with an informed consent form, which outlined the confidentiality of their responses and ensured their willingness to participate (Seidman, 2006). The universe of the study is 109 Eskişehir tour guides. Data was collected from 19 active tour guides registered with the Ankara Chamber of Tour Guides (ANRO). Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure the representation of diverse professional experiences so that they could see the experienced guides and the new tour guides, as Eskişehir has become the most visited destination in domestic tourism and a very crowded destination on weekends. It is thought that the visit of these crowded groups also causes an increase in the risks of the tours. In-depth and face-to-face interviews lasting 20 to 60 minutes were conducted in September 2024. All data were anonymized to protect participant confidentiality.

Data Analysis

This research aims to explore the risk management experiences of tour guides using a phenomenological approach. Phenomenological research offers a different perspective on the educational process, one that is subjective and goes beyond the rational points of view that situate the mind at the center. In this respect, phenomenological self-understanding offers a perspective that differs from the mainstream education theories (Jardine, 1987). The phenomenological studies presented here are essential in eliminating the traditional approaches in which the learning phenomenon is presented separately from the body and the context.

Methodologically, grasping learning based on interdisciplinarity, power balances, and context reveals the learning process in a more nuanced way. Phenomenology is a method used to explore how individuals perceive and make sense of particular experiences (Creswell, 2013). This method will provide an in-depth perspective to understand tour guides' emotional, psychological, and social experiences concerning the risks they face. The phenomenological approach will help us explore the 'real' experiences, challenges, and solutions that tour guides go through during their work in detail. Descriptive and content analysis are used in the analysis phase of the research data. In the light of the data obtained, information was obtained on what are the challenges of the tour guiding profession, what kind of preparations tour guides make before going on tour, what kind of risks they face before going on tour, and whether they take any precautions against the risks they face.

FINDINGS

The data was organized and described in accordance with the principles of phenomenological design as they relate to qualitative research to identify quotations in the interviews. The tour guides' responses were identified and grouped according to the themes that

emerged from the data. The four themes are the challenges of the tour guiding profession, pre-tour preparation, pre-tour risks, and risks during the tour.

To ensure consistency and avoid any potential bias caused by the self-reporting of the guides, the frequency of the codes was used as a basis for the analysis. It was, therefore, decided that only those codes repeated by at least two guides would be included. The codes were then transformed into categories. At this stage, it was possible to either use predetermined categories or to allow new categories to emerge (Dawson, 2016). The demographic characteristics of the tour guides, the themes, sub-themes, and codes that emerged from the content analysis applied to the data obtained from the participants, and their frequencies are presented in the tables below.

Table 1.

Demographic characteristics of the Tour Guides

<i>Tour Guide</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>Experience (Year)</i>
TG1	32	Male	English	9
TG2	42	Female	English	12
TG3	31	Male	English	10
TG4	32	Male	German	9
TG5	31	Male	German	7
TG6	65	Female	English	34
TG7	26	Female	English	5
TG8	30	Male	English	5
TG9	51	Male	English	31
TG10	27	Male	English	4
TG11	27	Male	English	5
TG12	29	Male	English	7
TG13	41	Male	English	15
TG14	43	Female	English	5
TG15	28	Male	English	6
TG16	38	Male	English	15
TG17	28	Male	English	5
TG18	30	Male	Russian	5
TG19	33	Female	English	9

Table 1 demonstrates the characteristics of the tour guides. The average age of the participants is 34 (the youngest is 26 years old, and the eldest is 65 years old). The 14 participants are male, and the five of them are female. The interviewed tour guides generally speak English. Also, German and Russian are two of their foreign language. The average tour guiding experience is 10 years (at least 4 years and at most 34 years). All the tour guides who participated in the study work as freelancers and are paid daily wages.

Table 2.

The Challenges of Tour Guiding Profession

<i>Theme 1</i>	<i>Sub-themes</i>	<i>Codes</i>
<i>The Challenges of Tour Guiding Profession</i>	<i>Tourist Behaviour</i>	Apathetic behaviours (9) Different expectations (5) Unpleasant arguments (3)
	<i>Working Conditions</i>	Intensive tour programs (8) Seasonal profession (6) Low wages (5)
	<i>Interaction with Other Service Providers</i>	Travel agency issues (12) Decreasing solidarity in the sector (7) Problems with the drivers (5)

As seen in Table 2, the challenges of the tour guiding profession are grouped under three sub-themes: *tourist behavior*, *working conditions*, and *interaction with other service providers*. According to the answers given by the tour guides, it can be said that in the sub-theme of *Tourist Behavior*, they mainly complain about the apathetic behaviors of the tourists. “*The purpose of the tours is to take photographs rather than to learn about history and culture*,” declares TG1. This situation causes the guides' narratives to fail to achieve their goals and their motivation to decrease. According to TG10, tour guides are bored with the different expectations of the tourists: “*One of the difficulties of this job is that people from different personalities and origins are together, and it is necessary to be able to address them all at once* (TG12)”. Besides, arguments between tourists or communication problems with the tour guide disrupt the group dynamic during the tour and require crisis management by the tour guides. TG11 commented, “*Not playing music on the bus and not entertaining the guests is also rewarded with the label “bad guide” in the surveys at the end of the tour (!). Apart from that, when the lies told by the agencies to sell the tour are revealed during the tour, it is tiring and frustrating to be the guests' interlocutor.*” These codes are evaluated in the *tourist behavior* sub-theme.

The second sub-theme of the challenges of the tour guide profession is *working conditions*. It was noted that tour guides generally have to work to tight and time-consuming tour programs. This situation can have a negative impact on the performance of the guides by causing physical and mental fatigue. TG4 points out, “*Sometimes we experience physical and mental fatigue, and there is a risk of accident.*” The tour guides point out that the tour guiding profession generally depends on a certain season, bringing along the lack of income security and continuous employment opportunities for tour guides. TG6 expresses that “*Seasonality; lack of job security; limited job opportunities; excessive responsibility imposed on the guide during the tours; the fact that the tours last until late hours and there are no set hours...*” this situation is considered as one of the difficult working conditions of the tour guiding profession. Guides state that despite the knowledge and skills required by the profession, they generally work for low wages. TG7 expresses that “*Agencies trying to reduce the guide wage by negotiating are forcing me.*” may negatively affect the prestige and attractiveness of the profession.

The third sub-theme of the challenges of the tour guide profession is *interaction with other service providers*. Tour guides face various problems due to insufficient support from travel agencies or poorly planned programs. Another issue is that the travel agencies do not design the tour itinerary logically while preparing the tour programs. “*Especially in daily tours, running to catch up with many places increases the dissatisfaction of the guests*” (TG17). Intensive or unrealistic tour programs make it especially difficult for tour guides. Besides, The decreasing solidarity and collegial support in the sector causes tour guides to feel lonely. TG9 states, “*Declining solidarity and respect in the sector makes me feel sad.*” In addition, tour guides draw attention to safety problems due to the inexperience of drivers and lack of sleep. TG18 stresses that “*I face risks with drivers and tour guide apprentices. Because they can be exhausted and reckless.*” In certain instances, it was asserted that the unprofessional conduct of the drivers impeded the tours.

Tour guides undertake meticulously planned actions before embarking on tours, ensuring seamless execution and optimal participant satisfaction. This study analyses the preparations made by tour guides before embarking on tours, categorizing them under three main themes: *operational preparations*, *narrative preparations*, and *personal preparations*. Table 3 illustrates the analysis of the extent of interdisciplinary skills and preparation processes required by those engaged in guiding.

The operational preparations sub-theme covers destination and tour route check, reservation check, and tour planning. TG2 says, “*I carefully check details such as traffic on the tour route, road conditions, and the opening hours of the places to be visited.*” This preparation helps flow the tour program easily and reduces potential disruptions. Making and confirming reservations for restaurants, hotels, and places to visit prevents tour disruption. TG8 supports that “*If we have got appointments booked in, I always check the number of people coming, etc., the day before.*” Confirming reservations for a range of establishments, including restaurants, hotels, and tourist attractions, prevents any potential disruption to the tour. TG5 supports that “*I*

verify the requisite bookings that I have to make.” The guides also organize the flow of the program, taking into account the expectations of the group members, time constraints, and itinerary details. TG13 says, “I organize the time planning of the tour.” TG3 estimates the risk by saying, “I plan that tour in my head and try to live it.” Thus, flexibility and problem-solving skills have been upgraded.

Table 3.

Pre-tour Preparation

<i>Theme 2</i>	<i>Sub-themes</i>	<i>Codes</i>
<i>Pre-Tour Preparation</i>	<i>Operational Preparations</i>	Destination and Tour Route Check (11)
		Reservation Check (7)
	<i>Narrative Preparations</i>	Tour planning (5)
Enrichment of narration (9)		
		Getting information about the group (6)
		Planning the narration (5)
	<i>Personal Preparations</i>	Personal Care and Appearance (14)
		Choosing suitable clothes for the tour and weather (11)
		Sufficient sleep and rest (6)

The second sub-theme of pre-tour preparation is *narrative preparations*. Tour guides refresh their knowledge to enrich their stories and present them effectively. They revisit the destination and work on their weaknesses. TG14 highlights, “*Even if I know the area very well, I usually reconstruct what I have to say in my head.*” Tour guides should have an in-depth knowledge of the historical, cultural, and geographical characteristics of the place visited. They should be able to present rich and compelling information during the narration. TG15 says, “*I organize the flow of the program, taking into account the expectations of the group members, time constraints, and itinerary details.*” This process requires flexibility and problem-solving skills.

The third sub-theme of Theme 2 is *personal preparations*, which covers the physical and mental preparation of the guides for the tour and emphasizes their responsibilities. TG16 says, “*Before the tour, I care about myself both physically and mentally.*” The fact that the tour guides take care of their appearance is an important element that strengthens the perception of professionalism. TG4 explains, “*I check the weather conditions, and if it is a long journey, I will be rested and vigorous and ready for the tour.*” Choosing appropriate clothing for the tour and the weather will help impress the tourists. TG8 explains, “*I always sleep well before I go on tour, I always eat breakfast, I have to have good energy.*” The tour guides' physical and mental strength contributes to the tour's success.

Tour guides indicated that they may be exposed to risks of different magnitudes before going on a tour. These risks cover various issues, including health, logistics, human relations, and operational processes. Participants indicated that they try to ensure the smooth running of their tour programs by taking various precautions against these risks. The results can be analyzed under four sub-themes: Health and Safety Risks, Operational Risks, Tourist Relations Risks, and Pre-Tour Risks.

The *health and safety risks* sub-theme covers *accident and disease risks* and the *risk of getting lost*. The risk of participants experiencing emergencies such as health problems and accidents was indicated. TG8 stresses, “*I look at the location of health facilities on the road in case of physical ailments.*” The risk of disappearance, especially in groups of children, is a significant concern for counselors. TG9 says, “*When I go on tours with small children, I think that I may face the risk of children getting lost, so I warn teachers or parents about this.*”

The second sub-theme of pre-tour risks is *operational risks*. Urban crowding and traffic are among the risks that disrupt plans. Therefore, the guides see this as one before the tour. TG3 points out that “*especially in crowded urban areas and traffic problems.*”

Intensive and low-feasibility tour programs prepared by agencies pose a risk for tour guides. TG7 explains, "Sometimes the agencies overfill the tour program, making it impossible to complete the program, sometimes it may take a long time to determine the dining places and their capacities without considering them."

Table 4.

Pre-Tour Risks

<i>Theme 3</i>	<i>Sub-themes</i>	<i>Codes</i>
	<i>Health and Safety Risks</i>	Accident and disease risks (8) Risk of getting lost (7)
<i>Pre-Tour Risks</i>	<i>Operational Risks</i>	Traffic and crowd (10) Intensive tour programs (7)
	<i>Tourist Relations Risks</i>	Fear of lousy group interaction (11) Fear of bad relations with other service providers (9)
	<i>Solutions to Pre-tour Risks</i>	Being ready for every crisis (13) Double-check for every detail (8) Working with familiar travel agencies (6)

The third sub-theme of the pre-tour risks is *tourist relations risk*. Tourist relations risks have two codes: Fear of lousy group interaction and fear of bad relations with other service providers. TG17 states, "There is also the risk that someone in the group will know more than me and use it to feed their ego or humiliate me." The inability to harmonize with the group, conflicts between group members, or underestimation of the group's leadership can cause a risk. Whether other service providers, such as agents or captains, are professional people is perceived as a risk factor. As seen in the answer of TG2, whether other service providers, such as agents or captains, are professional people is perceived as a risk factor. "Inexperience or incompatibility of agency personnel (e.g., captains) may cause operational disruptions." (TG2)

The fourth sub-theme of the pre-tour risks is solutions of Pre-tour Risks. Being ready for every crisis, doubling for every detail, and working with familiar travel agencies are the codes of solutions of the pre-tour risks sub-theme. Preparing for every crisis is a critical solution for tour guides to conduct their business professionally. It is based on recognizing risks in advance, taking preventive measures, and responding quickly and effectively in a crisis. TG15 primarily advises that "Tour guides should be prepared for instant problem solving and any crisis. They should be aware that this is a people-oriented profession that operates on a multivariate, slippery ground and should be treated accordingly." TG7 emphasizes double-checking all restaurant and museum reservations in advance and adjusting the route according to density. She says, "It is essential to check every detail to minimize the risk of overcrowding at lunch (TG7)." Tour guides state that working with familiar travel agencies can reduce the risks of the tour. TG18 confesses, "Working with captains that I have previously known how to behave helps me reduce the risks I feel before the tour. I prefer to go on tour with familiar agencies and captains to reduce the risks."

Risks during the tour are divided into three sub-themes: *internal risks*, *external risks*, and *solutions to risks during the tour*. Internal risks are compiled from three codes. One of the critical internal risks is health. For guests with mobility difficulties, injuries, or illnesses, occasional food-related illnesses can be complicated for the tour guides. TG1 states, "Guests suffering from illness,

rare food-borne illnesses, airborne illnesses, and physical fatigue are very common during the tour.” TG10 states, “When I encounter a problem during the tour, I stay calm and try to produce the most permanent and fastest solution. When necessary, I get support from the necessary places (such as health, security, etc. services, officials, etc.)” Non-compliance of participants with the program, overly busy programs, and time constraints can be problems for the tour operation. TG5 notes, “The most important risk that may be experienced during the tour is that the group may act independently of the group by ignoring the tour program, and therefore, the group’s gathering times may be delayed.” The following issues have been identified as requiring further attention: conflicts among guests change the group dynamics. TG13 states, “I often come across situations where the guests are not tolerant and respectful to each other. Sometimes, they can argue among themselves and bring it to the level of a fight.”

Table 5.
Risks during the Tour

<i>Theme 4</i>	<i>Sub-themes</i>	<i>Codes</i>
Risks during the tour	Internal Risks	Health issues (15) Operational issues (11) Group dynamics (7)
	External Risks	Transport and traffic (16) Safety risks (9) Service quality-based risks (5)
	Solutions to Risks During the Tour	Cooperation and information sharing (14) Problem solving and flexibility (11) Crisis management (10) Being calm and cool-blooded (6)

The second sub-theme of risks during the tour is External Risks. Traffic congestion, road closures, and route changes are consistently among the most critical risks during the tour. TG7 especially states, “The presence of traffic represents a considerable hazard, both in terms of safety and crowd control. As tour guides, we are exposed to significant risks pertaining to the loading and unloading of passengers, particularly in areas characterized by high levels of congestion.” Cases such as disappearance, theft, and snatching are external risks that make safety necessary; as TG4 emphasizes, “Theft and snatching incidents. Risk of getting lost and losing belongings, money, and similar items in younger school groups.” Problems such as poor service quality in catering and restaurants and long waiting times for guests can leave a negative impression during the tour. TG3 explains, “Overcrowding in museums, restaurants or archaeological sites; poor service, lack of reservations and unavailability of tables.”

The third sub-theme of the risks during the tour is solutions to risks during the tour. Cooperation and information sharing, problem-solving and flexibility, crisis management, and being calm and cool-blooded are the codes that can prevent risks during the tour. Seeking help from experts when needed, developing solutions by coordinating with company, institution, or agency representatives. According to TG6, “I try to eliminate the risks by keeping in touch with my colleagues, finding out where it is busy or not on the day of the tour, and asking for help if necessary.” Most participants aim to solve the problem as soon as possible. In this process, getting external help when necessary is also mentioned as an essential solution. TG9 stresses “developing fast and effective solutions to problems, organizing the tour program flexibly when necessary.” Making solution-oriented strategic decisions in instant crises reveals the importance of crisis management. As TG6 says, “I am using my crisis management skills.” Remaining calm and cool-headed is vital when faced with stressful and complex situations. TG8 supports that with this

answer: "I always try to stay cool and calm and find a solution in the shortest and best way. I think the most important thing is to stay calm and think calmly."

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

When the guide takes the group and starts the tour, they are now the only authorized and responsible person, the most critical person in bringing all the services together and presenting them to the tourist (Ön, Akyurt Kurnaz and Güzel, 2021, p. 202). It is widely acknowledged that most tour guides interact with a considerable number of guests daily. They are required to operate within a highly relational working environment, and they have to manage all of the risks. Tour guides assess potential risks before the tour and inform the guests about them. They make flexible program arrangements to develop quick and practical solutions to problems that arise during the tour. Occupational accidents and diseases are a significant problem today, negatively affecting the social and economic life of individuals. Like many other professions, the tour guide profession is challenging and requires physical and mental strength due to the working conditions. In other research, it is found to be the most critical reason behind work-related ill-health, followed by structural factors including long journeys, unemployment, working conditions, and constant responsibility (Chowdhary & Prakash, 2008; Mackenzie & Kerr, 2013; Ababneh, 2017). Besides, the tour guide profession requires frequent travel, and it can be described as a tiring and stressful profession, with risks of accidents, an intense pace of work, and long working hours (Ulusoy Mutlu, Balıkoğlu, Akgül & Köroğlu, 2024). Tour guides plan to deal with situations such as the risk of guests getting lost. The risk management strategies of tour guides are critical for the safety and satisfaction of guests. Tour guides' flexibility, crisis management skills, and planning ability contribute to effectively managing risks. Tour guides should be encouraged to receive more training on risk management and share their experiences. Remaining calm and cool-headed is a vital solution when faced with stressful and complex situations, and it is one of the most essential skills of guides.

Theoretical Implications

Tour guides should identify the locations of nearby health facilities in case the participants need medical assistance due to physical ailments. Determining museums' opening and closing hours is important in reducing the risk. Tour guides generally stated that tour programs designed by the travel agency without enough thought create risks. This result of the research is similar to the results of Arslan and Akkuş (2024) in that the agencies sometimes make it impossible to complete the tour program by overfilling it (Arslan & Akkuş, 2024, p. 1983). Sometimes, travel agencies create significant risks by making reservations without considering the restaurants and their capacities. To avoid these potential pitfalls, the details of the itinerary must be discussed in advance with the relevant agency staff to develop practical solutions to facilitate the necessary arrangements. Tour guides have expressed concern that they will be unable to reach the places they are most needed. They explained that they initially informed the tour group about this and took precautions by requesting the group follow the planned itinerary. The results of this research are similar to the results of Chang, Shen, and Li (2018) in terms of factors such as occupational safety and risk management, financial risks, personal risks, work risks, service tourist route and tipping issues, tourist visa and passport duration, hijacking and plane crash, baggage loss and damage, document and asset theft, and measures and strategies to be taken for the management of risks (Chang, Shen and Li, 2008). Considering that there is a risk of children getting lost, especially on tours with young children, tour guides stated that they warn teachers or parents accompanying groups of school children. In addition, the risks related to crowding and traffic in the city were also mentioned significantly. The ability of guides to remain calm in times of crisis, to act quickly to find solutions, and to cooperate with their colleagues when necessary is key to eliminating such risks. These approaches are key factors in ensuring that tours run smoothly.

Practical Implications

Eskişehir is regarded as a favored destination for domestic tourism due to its historical, cultural, and tourist attractions. Several potential risks are associated with the tour guiding

profession in Eskişehir. The tour guide assumes the role of leader and thus bears the responsibility of managing numerous concurrent tasks. In this context, guides must be able to identify potential risks in advance and implement strategies to manage them. Identifying risks perceived by tour guides in Eskişehir and the subsequent development of solutions to mitigate these risks will benefit both the guides currently operating in the region and those seeking employment as guides in Eskişehir. It was emphasized that to minimize the risks faced by those in this profession, it is necessary to increase awareness and consciousness among both those who perform this role and the guests. Furthermore, they said they interact with other colleagues during the tour by learning whether it is busy or not and asking for assistance if necessary. Additionally, according to the density situation, they aim to implement prompt solutions to circumvent disruptions in the tour program. Tour guides must possess crisis management abilities and maintain composure during negative occurrences. Also, it is essential to address the underlying cause of the problem to resolve the situation effectively. When a risk is identified, it is crucial to remain calm and seek the most efficient and optimal solution. The tour guides residing in Eskişehir stated that they made a preliminary assessment of possible risks at the beginning of the tour and warned the guests in advance about the situations they might encounter. However, they stated that they used instant crisis management skills to address most of the risks that emerged during the tour. The future of the tourism sector needs to reveal the problems perceived by professional tour guides to perform their profession better. In addition, it is pointed out that the work programs of guides should be planned well; they should not work below the base wage, and illegal guides should be prevented by increasing inspections.

- Tour guides can consider the following suggestions to eliminate risks.
- Risk management training can be given to tour guides.
- A review of risk factors should be made at the start of the tour.
- Tour guides should warn guests about possible risks.
- To minimize possible risks, the awareness and consciousness of all service providers and tourists involved in the tour should be increased.
- Tour guides should be able to take initiative. They should have crisis management skills.
- In unexpected situations, tour guides should discuss the problem with the relevant business-institution officials and propose applications to produce solutions.
- Tour guides should try to remain calm when faced with any risk.

In light of the findings of this study, several recommendations can be considered in the existing literature. The initial recommendation pertains to prospective research endeavors. It is anticipated that this study will inform future research concerning guides' experiences in risk management. In this regard, the findings of this study can be generalized by investigating the following: (1) how guides address risk management, (2) the solutions they propose, and (3) the actions that should be taken before and during the tour to ensure its success. This can be achieved through a quantitative research approach. In Eskişehir, the factors that create risks in tours can be identified, and these risks can be eliminated through stakeholder interviews.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has certain limitations. First of all, this research contains the experience of tour guides of Eskişehir. So, there is no expectation of generalizing the research results. Similar studies to be conducted in other countries will shed more light on the risk management of tour guides. Secondly, in the research, the risks experienced by tour guides within the scope of risk management and their solution proposals were discussed from the perspective of tour guides. In this way, the studies to be carried out with the various parties involved in the issue can provide a more comprehensive picture. This study sheds light not only on tour guides but also on tour guide candidates, who have mostly not experienced being tour guides. For this reason, future studies should also pay more attention to the issues mentioned above. Future research can interview tour guides speaking other foreign languages to enhance the variety of tour guides as they can see the different risk management styles.

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