



Exploring the Engagement, Interests, And Challenges of Tour Guides In Fostering Responsible Tourism in Sri Lanka

Pattiyagedara P.G.S.S, Ranasinghe J.P.R.C, Arachchi R.S.S.W

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Abstract

This study explores the role of tour guides in fostering responsible tourism in Sri Lanka, focusing on their engagement, interests, and challenges. Conducted across three prominent destinations. Yala National Park, Ella, and Hiriwadunna Village Track. this research used qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews with 22 tour guides, supported by content analysis. The findings reveal that tour guides act as cultural educators, environmental advocates, and community liaisons, actively promoting sustainability through artistic interpretation, ecological stewardship, and community involvement. However, they face financial constraints, conflicting tourist expectations, limited training, and inadequate infrastructure. A key limitation of the study is its focus on a limited geographical scope and stakeholder group, which may not fully capture the diverse dynamics of responsible tourism in Sri Lanka. This study contributes to tourism management by offering insights for policymakers, tourism operators, and educators to strengthen tour guide training, infrastructure, and community partnerships, enhancing sustainable practices. The novelty lies in its emphasis on the socio-cultural and environmental roles of tour guides in Sri Lanka's tourism landscape, providing actionable recommendations to bridge gaps in sustainable tourism practices.

1.1. Background of the Study

Tourism plays a pivotal role in the socio-economic development of nations, fostering cultural exchange, economic growth, and environmental conservation. Being an important economic activity in most countries, tourism has significant indirect and induced impacts on the economy. The effect of COVID-19 has emphasized the tremendous importance and positive contribution of Travel & Tourism. It enables socio-economic development, job creation, poverty reduction, driving prosperity, and significant positive social impact, including providing unique opportunities to women, minorities, and youth. The benefits of Travel & Tourism spread far beyond its direct impacts in terms of GDP and

employment; with indirect gains spreading through the entire ecosystem and the supply chain linkages to other sectors. In recent years, the concept of responsible tourism has gained prominence, emphasizing the need for sustainable and ethical practices within the industry. As a popular tourist destination, Sri Lanka comprises a delicate balance between maximizing the benefits of tourism and minimizing its negative impacts on local communities and the environment.

Responsible tourism, which emphasizes sustainability, community well-being, and environmental conservation, is increasingly recognized as vital for the long-term health of the tourism industry. Tour guides, as frontline representatives of this industry, play a crucial role in promoting responsible tourism practices. This study explores the engagement, interests, and challenges faced by tour guides in fostering responsible tourism in Sri Lanka, a country renowned for its rich cultural heritage and diverse natural landscapes. Sri Lanka, known for its rich cultural heritage, biodiversity, and scenic landscapes, has witnessed a surge in tourism. The growth, while economically advantageous, has prompted concerns about the potential adverse effects on the environment, local cultures, and communities. Responsible tourism is seen as a solution to mitigate these negative impacts while enhancing the positive contributions of tourism (UNWTO, 2019). Understanding the perspectives and experiences of tour guides is crucial as they serve as intermediaries between tourists and the local environment, acting as cultural ambassadors and educators. Tour guides play a pivotal role in shaping tourists' experiences and influencing their behaviors. They are not merely conduits of information but act as facilitators, leader, resource manager for responsible choices. The engagement of tour guides in promoting responsible tourism is a critical aspect of achieving sustainability in the industry. Effective engagement of tour guides in responsible tourism development can lead to better conservation outcomes, more meaningful tourist experiences, and stronger community support for tourism activities (Ap & Wong, 2001). Despite their crucial role, tour



guides often face significant challenges that hinder their ability to promote responsible tourism. By understanding their motivations, interests, and challenges, can develop strategies to enhance their capacity to foster responsible tourism practices. This study seeks to examine the proactive role (engagement) of tour guides in promoting responsible tourism, to explore the interests and motivations that drive tour guides towards responsible tourism and to Identify challenges encountered by tour guides in promoting responsible tourism.

1.2 Scope of the study

This study was intended to explore the engagement, interests, and challenges of tour guides in fostering responsible tourism in Sri Lanka. Even though the study was in the context of selected tourism destinations of Sri Lanka, only three destinations Yala National Park, Ella, and Hiriwadunna Village Track were selected, based on socio-cultural, economic, and environmental criteria. In measuring Responsible Tourism practices, the same locations have been taken into consideration.

1.3 Limitations of the Study

This study has selected a few tourism destinations in Sri Lanka and only considers the selected tour guides' perspectives. Moreover, selected tour guides might not always provide honest or accurate responses due to fear or desire to present themselves in a positive light. and also, few participants do not fully understand the purpose of the research, hence, they haven't a clear understanding, particularly in areas with low levels of formal education. To explore and foster the benefits of responsible tourism, it's not enough to consider only the tour guide's perspectives. All tourism stakeholders should participate in fostering responsible tourism in Sri Lankan tourism.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the role of tour guides in promoting responsible tourism in Sri Lanka. This includes examining their level of engagement, the interests that drive their participation, and the challenges they face in fostering sustainable and ethical tourism practices. By exploring these dimensions, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how tour guides contribute to responsible tourism, identify the factors that motivate or hinder their efforts and offer recommendations for enhancing their effectiveness. Ultimately, this research seeks to inform policymakers, tourism operators, and

educators on how to better support tour guides in their crucial role, thereby contributing to the overall sustainability and cultural sensitivity of the tourism industry in Sri Lanka.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Tourism in Sri Lanka

With aiming to be recognized as the world's finest island for memorable, authentic and diverse experiences it should be a high-value destination offering extraordinary experiences that reflect the natural and cultural heritage of Sri Lanka, socially inclusive and environmentally responsible and provide economic benefits to communities and the country (SLTDA, 2017). Tourism has traditionally been as the third largest foreign exchange earner in Sri Lanka. Over 1.9 million tourists' arrivals recorded in 2019. After month of the April 2019, Due to the Easter terrorist attack 21% drop from the previous year recorded. The estimated value of that sector was around \$ 3.5 billion in 2019. The effects of global COVID 19 Pandemic crippled the sector in 2020.

Sri Lanka has a rich history of tourism dating back to ancient times when traders and explorers visited the island attracted by its natural and historical attraction, cultural heritage, and strategic location in the Indian Ocean (Fernando, 2018). However, the modern tourism industry in Sri Lanka began to flourish in the post-independence era, particularly after the end of the civil war in 2009 (Ranasinghe & Pradeepa, 2020). The government has implemented various initiatives to promote tourism in Sri Lanka, including infrastructure development, marketing campaigns, and policy reforms (Jayawardena & Dissanayake, 2019). Despite its potential, the tourism industry in Sri Lanka faces several challenges due to the diversifies scenarios. These include environmental degradation, cultural commodification, seasonality, and political instability, (Weerasooriya, 2017). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the tourism sector, leading to a drastic decline in tourist arrivals and revenue (Fernando & Tisdell, 2021). Nevertheless, there are opportunities for the sustainable development of tourism in Sri Lanka. These include diversifying tourist attractions beyond the traditional beach destinations, promoting ecotourism and community-based tourism, enhancing infrastructure connectivity, and leveraging digital technologies for marketing and management (Silva & Weerasinghe, 2020). Tourism has an influence on quality-of-life indices (Yi, 2015). Its expansion has the potential to significantly enhance residents' quality of life (Uysal et al., 2016). As an outcome, tourism development will enhance people's



standard of living if it is moderated by responsible tourism activities (Hanafiah et al., 2016).

2.2 Responsible Tourism

Responsible tourism is a novel approach that ensures that local residents realize a fair share of the benefits of development of tourism. It strives to enhance better touristic hotspots and improve the visitor experience more delightful (Mina and Alireza, 2021). According to the Ford & Acott (2015), While sustainable tourism has its roots in the 1970 and 1980s, responsible tourism has been highlighted in tourism in recent decade. Although official statistics are not available, the current trends indicate that the responsible tourism approach is being developed (Mody et al., 2017). There are several sustainability initiatives such as alternative Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, green tourism, Community- based tourism, pro-poor tourism, geo tourism, eco-tourism etc. have merged in response to the increasing social and environmental problems caused by tourism. Responsible tourism considered as recently emerged forms of tourism, closely related to the above concepts (Chettiparamb & Kokkranikal, 2012). Green tourism and eco-tourism focus on the environmental aspects (Andari & Setiyorini, 2017). Pro-poor tourism is oriented to the economic aspects (Hrubcova et al., 2016; Mody et al., 2017), Community based tourism oriented to social aspects (Goodwin & Font, 2014), and alternative tourism is the initial form of sustainable tourism. There is a close relationship between sustainable tourism and Responsible tourism, they are often used as interchangeably (Glen, 2017). According to the Mahalic (2016), Sustainable tourism aspects and responsible tourism activities follow the same goals. However, the concept of sustainability is recognized as a theory while the concept of responsible is recognized as a practice.

When the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) adopted the guidelines of the "Global Code of Ethics for Tourism," which encourages responsible Tourism, sustainable Tourism, and equitable tourism, the idea of RST was first set - up. It suggested ten elements, all of which should be considered while developing an effective strategy for RSTM development. They are as follows: The contribution of tourism to cross - cultural understanding and mutual respect, Tourism as an approach to achieving both individual and collective fulfillment, Tourism as a driver of sustainable growth, tourism, a user of the cultural heritage of human kind and contributor to its enhancement Tourism, a profitable industry for host nations and local communities, responsibilities of

parties involved in the development of the tourism industry, right to tourism, liberty of tourist movements, rights of workers and entrepreneurs in the tourism industry, promotes respect between tourists and local people.

2.3 Responsible Tourism Development in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka Tourism industry was the hardest hit industry in previous decades (Sri Lanka Tourism alliance, 2021). There are many issues to take into account, sadly, when it comes to responsible tourism in Sri Lanka (Silva, 2021). Sri Lanka government is starting to act upon this but, progress is still slow (UNHCR, 2019). Implementation for making Sri Lankan tourism sustainable & responsible: sharing and caring is more important (Silva, 2021). There is an urgent need for ground level awareness and understanding for necessary actions of responsible tourism development in Sri Lanka (Silva, 2021). The Sri Lankan government plays a pivotal role in driving responsible tourism development. The National Tourism Development Strategy outlines a comprehensive framework for sustainable tourism, emphasizing the integration of responsible practices across the industry (Ministry of Tourism Development and Christian Religious Affairs, 2017).

An initialization of responsible tourism in Sri Lanka is community engagement and empowerment. Initiatives focus on ensuring that local communities are active participants and beneficiaries of tourism activities. Homestays, community-based tourism projects, and partnerships with local artisans provide avenues for communities to share their unique cultural heritage while generating income (De Silva & Gurung, 2021). This approach not only enhances the authenticity of tourist experiences but also fosters a sense of pride and ownership among local residents. Sri Lanka's commitment to responsible tourism is evident in its efforts to safeguard the island's natural treasures. Protected areas and national parks are managed with a focus on conservation, minimizing the environmental impact of tourism activities. Sustainable practices, such as waste management programs and eco-friendly accommodation options, contribute to the preservation of biodiversity and ecosystems (UNWTO, 2019). Responsible tourism development in Sri Lanka places a strong emphasis on the preservation of cultural heritage as well. The restoration and maintenance of historical sites, such as the ancient city of Polonnaruwa and the Dambulla Cave Temple, are integral components of sustainable tourism. Educational programs and guided tours promote respect for local traditions and encourage



visitors to engage with cultural practices responsibly (Ruhanen & Cooper, 2020). The private sector in Sri Lanka's tourism industry is increasingly adopting responsible business practices. Hotels and tour operators are implementing sustainable policies, including energy-efficient measures, waste reduction initiatives, and the support of local suppliers (Gurung & De Silva, 2020).

2.4 The Role of Tour Guides in fostering Responsible Tourism

Tour guides play a pivotal role in shaping tourists' experiences and influencing their behaviors. They are not merely conduits of information but act as facilitators for responsible choices. The engagement of tour guides in promoting responsible tourism is a critical aspect of achieving sustainability in the industry. As the global tourism landscape increasingly acknowledges the importance of responsible tourism, understanding the role of tour guides in this context becomes imperative. Tour guides act as cultural interpreters, bridging the gap between tourists and the local communities they visit. Their ability to convey the historical, cultural, and social significance of destinations enriches tourists' experiences and fosters a deeper appreciation for the places they explore (Weaver & Lawton, 2017). In the term of responsible tourism, cultural interpretation becomes a crucial tool for promoting respect and understanding, encouraging tourists to engage with local traditions and practices.

Beyond depend on the information dissemination, tour guide serves as educators, enlightening tourists about the environmental and socio-cultural values of the destinations they visit. Through storytelling and contextualization, tour guides can instill a sense of responsibility among tourists, encouraging them to minimize their impact on local ecosystems and communities (Buckley, 2019). Effective education by tour guides contributes to the cultivation of responsible behaviors among tourists, aligning with the principles of sustainable tourism.

Tour guides are well-positioned to advocate for sustainable practices within the tourism industry. They can influence tourists to make responsible choices, such as supporting local businesses, respecting cultural norms, and minimizing their environmental footprint. This advocacy role is particularly vital in destinations facing challenges related to over-tourism, as tour guides can play a pivotal part in redirecting tourist behaviors toward more sustainable patterns (Weaver & Lawton, 2017).

2.5 Concept Indicator Model

The conceptual indicated model can be developed based on research problems, and objectives. Through this model, the researcher can illustrate the research approach in some image and text forms to facilitate the reader's understanding of the research approach. For this research, the conceptual indicator model is illustrated as follows.

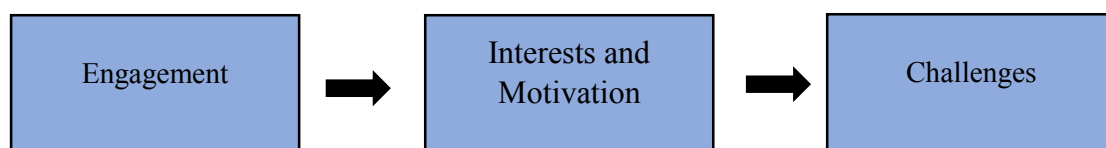


Figure 2.1: Concept Indicator Model
Source: Developed by the Researcher (2024)

3. Methodology

The population for this study comprises professional tour guides actively engaged in the tourism industry in Sri Lanka. The selection includes tour guides from Yala National Park, Ella and Hiriwadunna village track. The goal is to capture a diverse range of experiences and perspectives within the profession. A purposive sampling method was employed to select 22 tour guides from selected destinations as the saturation is reached and structured interviews were used to collect data. Because structured interviews are that it is time-efficient, it restrict interviewer subjectivity and bias. Content analysis was employed for the qualitative data gathered from interviews and observations.

Content analysis is the most widely used method of qualitative data analysis that focuses on the identification of patterned significance across a dataset. It aims to identify meaning patterns across a dataset that provide an answer to the research question to be dealt with. 12 face-to-face interviews were held with tour guides and others were contacted via phone and e-mail. The length of each interview ranged from 30 minutes to 45 minutes. Firstly, the background of the study and the purpose of the interview have been explained to the participants to get an idea about the study. After clarifying some details like the duration of the interview, the researcher asked to get permission to record the conversation and whether the actual interview was



conducted with insights related to engagements, interests, and challenges regarding responsible tourism. After collecting data, data were transcribed based on the nature of the data, and coding were created. In this study, the researcher coded the data into the key 3 codes to achieve the research objectives and subdivided relevant data into subsections under those codes.

1. Engagement
2. Interest
3. Challenges

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Objective 1: To examine the proactive role (engagement) of tour guides in promoting responsible tourism

4.1.1 Social Cultural Interpretation and Education

Many tour guides expressed a deep passion for socio-cultural interpretation and education, emphasizing their role as storytellers and ambassadors of Sri Lanka's rich heritage. This theme highlights that the role of the tour guides and engagement goes beyond transactional interactions, with tour guides viewing themselves as educators and interpreter. Their commitment to providing context and historical narratives underscores the importance they place on fostering a deeper understanding of Sri Lanka's cultural identity among tourists. Their engagement in cultural interpretation and education reflects a commitment to fostering a genuine appreciation for the traditions, stories, and historical significance embedded in Sri Lanka's cultural tapestry (UNWTO, 2017).

I see myself as a bridge between the tourists and our culture. It's not just about showing them places. It's about making them understand the significance values, stories and history behind every site we visit.
(Respondent 14- Personal Communication 2024)

I always encourage my group to minimize their impact. Whether it's carrying reusable water bottles or respecting wildlife, small actions can make a big difference.

(Respondent 2- Personal Communication 2024)

According to the results, the above explanation reflects tour guides' active efforts to maintain a sense of responsibility in tourists, aligning with broader sustainable tourism goals.

4.1.2 Environmental Stewardship

This commitment is reflected in their practices and narratives, emphasizing the importance of minimizing ecological footprints and promoting

sustainable behaviors among tourists. Through educational initiatives, tour guides inform visitors about local ecosystems, wildlife conservation efforts, and pollution and habitat destruction impacts. They actively encourage reducing waste, respecting wildlife, and supporting eco-friendly businesses. Moreover, tour guides often participate in and lead environmental conservation activities, such as clean-up drives and tree-planting initiatives. This dedication to environmental stewardship is key to their role in promoting responsible tourism.

As tour guides, we're the custodians of Sri Lanka's beautiful landscapes. I feel a responsibility to educate tourists on reducing their impact and preserving our environment for future generations."

(Respondent 8- Personal Communication 2024)

4.1.3 Cultural Preservation

Tour guides consistently demonstrate a deep respect and commitment to safeguarding the country's rich cultural heritage. This commitment is evident in their efforts to educate tourists about the historical significance, traditions, and practices of local communities. Through their narratives, tour guides emphasize the importance of respecting cultural sites, participating in traditional ceremonies with sensitivity, and supporting local artisans and cultural practices.

Our culture is a treasure. I love sharing its richness with visitors, but it's important to do so respectfully. We guide tourists to engage in meaningful interactions, fostering cultural exchange rather than intrusion"

(Respondent 2- Personal Communication 2024)

Preserving our traditions is not just about showcasing them. Responsible tourism means tourists leaving with respect and locals with dignity.

(Respondent 3- Personal Communication 2024)

4.1.4 Community Involvement

The collected data reveals that community involvement is a crucial element in the engagement of tour guides in fostering responsible tourism in Sri Lanka. They facilitate interactions between tourists and residents, allowing visitors to learn about and participate in community activities. This includes promoting locally-owned businesses, such as handicraft shops and homestays, which helps to sustain the local economy.

Tourism should benefit everyone....

(Respondent 3- Personal Communication 2024)

Our goal is not just to show tourists our country but to involve locals in the journey. Collaborating with



communities ensures a more authentic and responsible experience for everyone."

(Respondent 1-
Personal Communication 2024)

4.2 Objective 2: To explore the interests and motivations that drive tour guides toward responsible tourism

4.2.1 Passion for Environmental Conservation and Preservation

The analysis reveals that tour guides derive personal fulfillment and a sense of purpose from their role as environmental advocates, which is a key driver of their commitment to responsible tourism. This passion is evident in their efforts to educate tourists about the ecological significance of local environments, the importance of sustainable practices, and the impact of human activities on nature. The analysis reveals that tour guides derive personal fulfillment and a sense of purpose from their role as environmental advocates, which is a key driver of their commitment to responsible tourism. Many tour guides expressed a genuine interest in protecting Sri Lanka's diverse ecosystems. One guide remarked,

Our natural beauty ... and it's our responsibility to ensure it stays that way. I take great pleasure in showing tourists the wonders of our wildlife and landscapes while emphasizing the need to protect them."

(Respondent 1-
Personal Communication 2024)

4.2.2 Cultural Pride and Heritage Promotion

Tour guides exhibited a strong interest in promoting and preserving Sri Lanka's cultural heritage. Many conveyed a sense of cultural pride and saw their role as heritage ambassadors. A guide shared,

Our culture is so rich and diverse. I want tourists to leave with not just memories of beautiful places but a genuine appreciation for our traditions, customs, and the stories that make us who we are."

(Respondent 3- Personal Communication 2024)

4.2.3 Personal Growth through Responsible Tourism

An interesting theme that emerged was tour guides expressing personal growth through engagement in responsible tourism practices. Many guide their involvement as an opportunity for continuous learning and self-improvement. One respondent mentioned,

"Being a part of sustainable tourism or responsible tourism has expanded my knowledge. I learn from the tourists, and I learn from the places we visit. It's a journey of growth for me too."

(Respondent 4- Personal Communication 2024)

The interests of tour guides extend beyond professional obligations, there is a passion for environmental conservation to a desire for personal growth and contribution to sustainable development, it showcases a multifaceted set of motivations that go beyond financial incentives (Han & Kim, 2018; De Silva & Gurung, 2021).

4.2.4 Desire to Contribute to Sustainable Development

Tour guides demonstrated an interest in contributing to sustainable development, recognizing their role in shaping the socio-economic landscape of their communities.

Tourism can be a force for good and wellbeing. It's not just about showing beautiful places it's about contributing to the well-being of our communities. Responsible tourism ensures that the benefits are sustainably and responsibly."

(Respondent 2- Personal Communication 2024)

4.2.5 Social responsibility

We need to be mindful of the cultural and social dynamics of the tourism destinations we visit. It's not just about taking. it's about giving back and respecting the communities that open their doors to us."

(Respondent 6- Personal Communication 2024)

Their desire for personal growth, contribution to sustainable development goals in society, and adherence to ethical considerations showcase a multifaceted motivation by tour guides in their job role.

4.3 Objective 3: To Identify challenges encountered by tour guides in promoting responsible tourism

4.3.1 Economic Pressures

4.3.1.1 Financial Constraints

The analysis reveals that financial constraints are a significant challenge for tour guides in promoting responsible tourism in Sri Lanka. Many tour guides face limited financial resources, which restricts their ability to implement and advocate for sustainable practices. For instance, eco-friendly equipment, such as reusable materials or sustainable transportation options, often create higher costs that tour guides might not afford.

Balancing responsible practices with economic sustainability is tricky. We want to do the right thing, but financial constraints sometimes limit our options."

(Respondent 2- Personal Communication 2024)



Responsible tourism should benefit everyone involved, including us. It's about finding a balance where everyone's efforts are acknowledged and rewarded.“

(Respondent 6- Personal Communication 2024)

4.3.2 Conflicting Tourist Expectations and Responsible Practices

Conflicting tourist expectations present another significant challenge for tour guides striving to promote responsible tourism. Many tourists expect comfort and convenience, which can sometimes conflict with sustainable practices. For example, tourists might prefer single-use plastics for their convenience, or choose transportation options that are not eco-friendly. Tour guides often find themselves, needing to satisfy their clients to ensure positive reviews and repeat business, while also trying to advocate for environmentally responsible behaviors. This conflict can make it difficult for tour guides to enforce sustainable practices consistently.

Some tourists come seeking luxury and convenience, which sometimes clashes with responsible practices like minimizing waste or choosing eco-friendly accommodations.”

(Respondent 3- Personal Communication 2024)

4.3.3 Time Constraints during Tours

Tours are often tightly scheduled to maximize the number of sites visited and activities experienced within a limited timeframe. This rushed schedule leaves little room for detailed discussions and educational efforts to inform tourists about responsible practices and their importance. Additionally, the pressure to adhere to strict timelines can prevent tour guides from incorporating slower, more sustainable travel options, such as walking tours or public transportation, into their itineraries.

We often have tight itineraries, and finding the right moments to discuss responsible practices can be tough. There's a constant pressure to keep things moving.”

(Respondent 6- Personal Communication 2024)

4.3.4 Limited Training on Responsible Tourism

Many tour guides lack access to comprehensive training programs covering responsible tourism principles and practices. This gap in knowledge and skills means that even well-intentioned guides may not have the tools or understanding necessary to promote sustainability effectively. Without proper training, tour guides might struggle to convey the importance of responsible tourism to their clients or to implement best practices themselves. This limitation highlights the need for more robust and accessible training programs to equip tour guides

with the necessary expertise to advocate for and implement responsible tourism strategies.

We learn on the job, but having formal training on responsible tourism would equip us to address challenges more effectively.”

(Respondent 4- Personal Communication 2024)

A notable finding from previous literature is the expressed desire for more training and support among tour guides. Strengthening their capabilities through formal training programs, workshops, and resources can empower them to effectively communicate responsible tourism practices, addressing the challenges posed by conflicting expectations and limited knowledge (Ruhanen & Cooper, 2020).

4.3.5 Infrastructural Limitations

The results highlight infrastructural limitations as a significant challenge for tour guides in promoting responsible tourism in Sri Lanka. Many tour guides report inadequate infrastructure and insufficient public transportation. Additionally, the lack of reliable and environmentally-friendly transportation options as well.

4.3.5.1 Lack of Facilities

lack of facilities hinders us. We guide tourists to be mindful, but without proper infrastructure, it's challenging to make a significant impact. “

“Improving waste disposal facilities is not just about convenience; it's about enabling responsible choices. Without proper infrastructure, our efforts are often limited”

(Respondent 6- Personal Communication 2024)

4.3.5.2 Limited Accessibility

Some of the most ecologically significant areas are hard to access. We want to guide tourists there responsibly, but the lack of infrastructure makes it a struggle. “

(Respondent 11- Personal Communication 2024)

Making remote areas accessible is a dual challenge – both for tourists to appreciate and for us to guide responsibly. Improved infrastructure is the key to unlocking these hidden gems responsibly

(Respondent 2- Personal Communication 2024)

4.3.6 Pressure from other stakeholders

Tour guides frequently encounter pressure from various stakeholders, including tourists, employers, and local businesses, which complicates their efforts to promote responsible tourism. Tourists often prioritize convenience and entertainment over sustainability, pushing guides to make compromises that may conflict with responsible tourism principles *Profit is the main thing... often prioritize profit margins over sustainability. expect guides to maximize the number of tours and minimize expenses, which can conflict with efforts to promote responsible tourism.*



(Respondent 6- Personal Communication 2024)

4.3.7 Job Insecurity and Seasonal Unemployment

Job insecurity and seasonal unemployment pose significant challenges for tour guides in their efforts to promote responsible tourism. The tourism industry in Sri Lanka is highly seasonal, with peak periods followed by extended off-seasons, leading to unstable employment for many tour guides. These economic uncertainties force guides to prioritize immediate income over long-term sustainability goals, as they need to secure as much work as possible during peak seasons. Additionally, the lack of job security makes it difficult for tour guides to invest in training or resources that would enhance their ability to promote responsible tourism.

“During the off-season, many guides including me face unemployment. This forces us to compromise on responsible tourism principles to secure enough tours during peak seasons to sustain ourselves”

(Respondent 10- Personal Communication 2024)

Tour guiding in Sri Lanka offers low earnings, especially during the off-peak seasons. Balancing responsible tourism with financial stability becomes tough when income is uncertain.”

(Respondent 4- Personal Communication 2024)

According to the majority of respondent reviews, the researcher can conclude that there are many challenges faced by tour guides in fostering responsible tourism in the Sri Lankan context.

Summary Table

Data	Codes	Categories	Subcategories
Objective 1	Engagement	Social Cultural Interpretation and Education Environmental Stewardship Cultural Preservation Community Involvement	
Objective 2	Interests and Motivation	Passion for Environmental Conservation and Preservation Cultural Pride and Heritage Promotion Personal Growth through Responsible Tourism Desire to Contribute to Sustainable Development Social responsibility	
Objective 3		Economic Pressure Conflicting Tourist Expectations and Responsible Practices Limited Training on Responsible Tourism Infrastructural Limitations Pressure from other stakeholders Job Insecurity and Seasonal Unemployment	Financial Constraints Time Constraints during Tours Lack of Facilities Limited Accessibility

Source: Develop by researcher based on the respondents’ reviews



5. Conclusion

In conclusion, a detailed description of the role that tour guides play in influencing visitor experiences is presented by their involvement, interests, and challenges in promoting responsible tourism in Sri Lanka. Future research could provide attention deeper into the effectiveness of training programs and interventions in enhancing the role of tour guides. Additionally, exploring the perspectives of tourists themselves on the influence of tour guides in responsible tourism could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the tourism dynamics. The results of this study conclude that our guides demonstrate a genuine commitment to responsible tourism. Further, motivations driving tour guides' participation in responsible tourism initiatives are diverse, ranging from personal values to economic incentives. Challenges that tour guides encounter in their efforts to foster responsible tourism as lack of awareness, economic pressure, competition, etc. Acknowledging and addressing the challenges can support tour guides in their role as ambassadors for responsible tourism.

6. Managerial Implication and Practical Implication

The improvement of government involvement and support is essential for responsible tourism development in Sri Lankan context. Similarly, investing in training and education with focusing on educating guides about responsible tourism principles is a must. Moreover, empowering the service providers with the necessary knowledge, resources, and authority to educate tourists about sustainable practices and encourage responsible behavior during tours will highly beneficial for long-term prosperity. Tour guides should actively engage with local communities to promote cultural exchange, foster mutual respect, and support community initiatives for sustainable tourism development. There is an agent need to implement a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the impact of responsible tourism on destination sustainability.

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