THE IMPORTANCE OF USING THE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE SKILLS FOR TOUR GUIDES AND THEIR PERFORMANCE

Ozlem Koroglu, Ahmet Koroglu

ABSTRACT: Emotional intelligence (EI) is being recognized as a correlate of success in various domains of personal and professional life. Numerous studies have identified EI skills as being strongly associated with success in academic achievement, general life experiences, and a wide range of factors related to people’s jobs. Tour guides act as intermediaries between tourists and an unfamiliar environment, thus playing an important role in the success or failure of a tour experience and influencing tourists’ perceptions of the host destination. Because tour guides have such responsibility for the overall satisfaction and impressions of tourists, the development of EI skills seems crucial for tour guides and their performance. They can use EI skills to both manage their own performance and to regulate tourists’ moods in order to most appropriately and effectively interact with them. While considerable evidence of the importance of EI has been acknowledged, research efforts on the EI studies of tour guides are lacking in the tourism literature. Hence, the aim of this study is to evaluate the importance of using the emotional intelligence skills for tour guides and their performance.

Key Words: Emotional Intelligence (EI), Emotional Intelligence Skills, Tour Guides.

Introduction

Traditionally, intelligence was considered the mixture of logical, mathematical, and problem-solving abilities, which was measured through IQ (intelligence quotient) tests. Recently, a number of authors have claimed that intelligence must be multidimensional (multiple intelligences), including musical, artistic, sports, social and other abilities, as well as the traditional cognitive abilities. Many authors have elaborated on the concept of multiple intelligence and emotion based abilities [3].

In 1981, James Dozier discovered the power of emotional intelligence (EI). The term EI had not been coined in 1981, but James Dozier provided a vivid example of what it is and he defined the term of EI: “The ability to perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotion in thought, understand and reason with emotion, and regulate emotion in the self and others” [6].

In 1985 Wayne Leon Payne wrote a doctoral dissertation which included the term EI in the title. This seems to be the first academic use of the term EI. In next five years, no one else seems to have used the term EI in any academic papers. Then in 1990 the work of two American university professors, John Mayer and Peter Salovey, was published in two academic journal articles. Mayer and Salovey, were trying to develop a way of scientifically measuring the difference between people’s ability in the area of emotions. They found that some people were better than others at things like identifying their own feelings, identifying the feelings of others, and solving problems involving emotional issues. The title of one of these papers was titled "Emotional Intelligence" [13]. Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined EI as “the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions” [22].

According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), EI includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth [20]. Mayer and Salovey (1990) have identified five areas for emotion based intelligences: the awareness and control of one’s emotions, the self-motivation to recognize other’s emotions, and the interpersonal relationship management. This is how they define emotional intelligence, as a kind of social intelligence.
Therefore, IQ has become an outdated concept and has been replaced by new dimensions of human abilities, including those based on emotions [3].

Peter Salovey and John Mayer first proposed their theory of EI in 1990. Over the intervening decade, theorists have generated several distinctive EI models, including the elaborations by Salovey and Mayer on their own theory [10]. The original model which developed by Salovey and Mayer postulated that EI is an umbrella concept comprising three distinct components, viz., appraisal and expression of emotions, regulation of emotions and utilization of emotional information in thinking and acting [24]. Instead, the person most commonly associated with the term EI is actually a New York writer and consultant named Daniel Goleman. In the early 1990's Goleman had been writing articles for the magazine Popular Psychology and then later for the New York Times newspaper. In 1992 he was doing research for a book about emotions and emotional literacy when he discovered the 1990 article by Mayer and Salovey. According to the article by Annie Paul, Goleman asked them permission to use the term EI in his book and that permission was granted providing he told people where he heard the term. Before then it seems his book was planning to focus on "emotional literacy". In 1995 Goleman's book came out under the title "Emotional Intelligence." The book made it to the cover of Time Magazine in the USA and Goleman began appearing on American television shows. He also began a speaking tour to promote the book and the book became an international best seller. It remained on the New York Times best-seller list for approximately one year [13]. In this book EI defined [8], as “the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships”.

Ever since the term (EI) was first introduced by Mayer and Salovey in 1990, it has been developed, adapted, modified, and embraced by both practitioners and scholars [22]. Emotional intelligence (EI) is being recognized as a correlate of success in various domains of personal and professional life. Despite proven hypotheses confirming the importance of EI in the personal and professional life, there is not, as yet, enough interest in the topic of EI among tourism scholars. Also EI studies on tour guiding are lacking in the tourism literature. Hence, the aim of this study is to evaluate the importance of using the EI and EI skills for tour guides and their performance. So, firstly the impact of EI on working life has been emphasized and than the importance of using the EI and EI skills for tour guides and their performance have been evaluated.

The Impact Of Emotional Intelligence On Working Life

Emotional intelligence (EI), which can be instilled, nurtured, or taught through proper education and training, contributes in a variety of areas of an individual’s personal and professional life [21]. Also it is claimed that EI may be the best predictor of success in life. The publication of Goleman’s influential books, Emotional Intelligence (1995) and Working with Emotional Intelligence (1998), has extended the EI concept to the business world and working life and made it widely popular. This popularity has led researchers to examine its applicability to various aspects of human functioning, particularly in the fields of psychology, education, sociology, and management. Numerous studies have identified emotional abilities as being strongly associated with success in academic achievement, general life experiences, and a wide range of factors related to people’s jobs. These factors include physical and mental health, work attitude, resistance to stress, interpersonal relations, employees’ creativity, leadership, team effectiveness, job satisfaction and performance and career achievements. EI is an active and essential ingredient of organizational success and provides for a more well-balanced work life [22].

EI can play a significant role in the work environment. Sy et al. (2006) stated that employees’ EI can predict work related outcomes such as job satisfaction and job performance. Recent research has shown that managers with high EI produce positive work attitudes and altruistic behaviors and that their employees enjoy higher job satisfaction and performance [26]. Similarly Kafetsios and Zampetakis (2008), proposed EI as an important predictor of key organizational outcomes including job satisfaction and there is accumulating evidence that EI abilities and traits influence job satisfaction. According to them there are several reasons why workers’ EI may influence job satisfaction and job performance. Interpersonally, emotion awareness and regulatory processes associated with EI are expected to benefit people’s social relationship hence affecting the experience of emotion and stress at work.
Intrapersonally, use of emotion and being aware of one’s own emotions can lead to regulating stress and negative emotion so that one can perform better at work [16]. Employees with high EI are more likely to have higher levels of job satisfaction because they are more adept at appraising and regulating their own emotions than are employees with low EI. For example, employees with high EI may be better at identifying feelings of frustration and stress and subsequently, regulating those emotions to reduce stress. Employees with high EI are more resilient because they are able to understand the causes of stress and develop strategies and perseverance to deal with the negative consequences of stress. Conversely, employees with low EI are likely to be less aware of their emotions and possess fewer abilities to cope with their emotions when faced with difficult situations, thereby, exacerbating their level of stress and decreasing their level of job satisfaction. Furthermore, employees with high EI are likely to experience high levels of job satisfaction because they can utilize their ability to appraise and manage emotions in others. This skill becomes significant in group settings where employees with high EI can use their skills to foster positive interactions that help boost their own morale, as well as the morale of the group, and contribute positively to the experience of job satisfaction for all [26].

Some researchers have theorized that job performance is influenced by employees’ ability to use emotions to facilitate performance. Employees could use both positive and negative emotions to their advantage to improve performance. For example, positive emotions, such as excitement or enthusiasm, could stimulate employees to provide better customer service, complete their work assignments, or contribute to the organization. Conversely, negative emotions, such as anxiety, could facilitate employees’ ability to focus on their work tasks. Employees with high emotional intelligence should be more adept at regulating their own emotions and managing other’s emotions to foster more positive interactions, which could lead to more organizational citizenship behaviors that contribute to performance [26]. According to Lane et. al. (2009) emotional intelligence is part of a general mental ability that can be enhanced or developed over time, and as such, has the potential to offer performance improvement.

Besides the impact of the EI on the job satisfaction and performance, EI influences organizational effectiveness in a number of areas: Employee recruitment and retention, development of talent, teamwork, employee commitment, morale and health, innovation, productivity, efficiency, sales, revenues, quality of service, customer loyalty, client or student outcomes. EI also affects the development of talent. The EI of the mentor, boss, or peer will influence the potential of a relationship with that person for helping organizational members develop and use the talent that is crucial for work effectiveness [6]. About the work effectiveness Othman et. al. (2008) stated that in professional service, it is proposed that EI is important in assisting employees to achieve highly in five facets of work effectiveness; job role, career role, innovator role, team role and organisation role. Similarly a survey was carried out by Kim et. al. (2009). Results from 196 supervisor-employee pairs supported that emotional competence (they prefer the term "competence" rather than "intelligence") was positively associated with proactive behaviors, and proactive behaviors were positively associated with both work effectiveness and social integration. In addition, proactive behaviors significantly mediated the relationships between emotional competence and work performance, although this was mostly true of followers who had a higher degree of autonomy in their work.

EI can predict work related outcomes such as job satisfaction, job performance, work effectiveness, social integration etc. On the other hand, there are many needs that face all organizations and employees today. Employees need to cope with massive, rapid change. Employees need to be more creative in order to drive innovation. Employees need to manage huge amounts of information. The organization needs to increase customer loyalty. Employees need to be more motivated and committed. Employees need to work together better. The organization needs to make better use of the special talents available in a diverse workforce. The organization needs to make good decisions about new markets, products, and strategic alliances. The organization needs to prepare people for overseas assignments. These are the intense needs of the organizations and their employees. And in virtually every case, emotional intelligence must play an important role in satisfying the needs [6].

In 1998, Goleman set out a framework of EI (Table 1) that reflects how an individual’s poten-
tial for mastering the skills of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management translates into on the job success in the workplace [9]. Overall, he claimed that EI is expected to contribute to effective performance at work as well as to success in personal life. Since Goleman has claimed the link between EI and effective performance, practitioners and researchers in the fields of human resources, management, and organizational behavior have paid increasing attention to understanding EI as an important factor explaining individual performance at work [5].

Table 1. A Framework of Emotional Intelligence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self (Personal Competence)</th>
<th>Other (Social Competence)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Awareness</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social Awareness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emotional self-awareness</td>
<td>• Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Accurate self-assessment</td>
<td>• Service orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Self-confidence</td>
<td>• Organizational awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Management</strong></td>
<td><strong>Relationship Management</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emotional self-control</td>
<td>• Developing others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trustworthiness</td>
<td>• Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conscientiousness</td>
<td>• Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adaptability</td>
<td>• Conflict management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Achievement drive</td>
<td>• Visionary leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Initiative</td>
<td>• Catalyzing change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Building bonds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teamwork and collaboration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


- **Self-awareness** is recognizing and understanding one’s own emotions; using them to guide behavior; accepting one’s strengths, weaknesses, and competencies; and possessing the self-confidence to succeed [12]. The dimension of self-awareness is further divided into three categories: emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence. Leaders who are aware of why they are experiencing emotional responses and what is causing the emotions are better able to self-manage these emotions because they can identify them. In addition, because they understand their reactions, they are better able to prevent miscommunications with others. In some studies high-performing managers were found to have significantly higher levels of self-awareness and self-awareness was found to be significantly related to job performance of service industry managers [11].

Bardzil and Salaski (2003: 99) stated that emotional intelligence is not about emotions, but more about the relationship between thoughts, feelings and behaviour. According to them, it may be seen as a measure of the degree to which individuals vary in their ability to perceive, understand and regulate their own emotions and those of others, and integrate these with their thoughts and actions. Therefore, individuals with high EI score display strong self-awareness and
interpersonal skill. They are empathic, adaptable and able to cope with pressure, and generally experience less stress and better health and morale. All these attributes are highly desirable for customer facing positions, and enhance the type of transformational management style required to create a positive service climate. As evidence also suggests that EI is a better predictor of management success than IQ, and that it can be developed, it seems appropriate to incorporate this concept into staff selection, performance management and training policies.

- **Self-management** is the ability to manage one’s emotions, impulses, and reactions; being able to adapt and change as necessary; be open and honest; possessing an internal drive to succeed; and maintaining an optimistic outlook [12]. The subcategories of self-management are self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, achievement orientation, and initiative. Many of these subcategories can affect the individual’s satisfaction, desire to continue employment, and organizational commitment, as well as have a strong influence on the actions of one’s subordinates. Self-management of emotions is important in conveying ideas and creating team spirit and team effectiveness. Being emotionally stable promotes free-flowing ideas and keeps the lines of communication open. In addition, leaders with good self-management skills are able to be better change agents and create buy-in to change by subordinates [11].

- **Social awareness**: The social awareness dimension of EI includes empathy, organizational awareness, and service orientation. Empathy is being aware of others’ feelings and needs, as well as being able to see things from others’ perspectives. Organizational awareness is being aware of the environment around oneself, including political undertones, while service orientation is meeting the needs of those to whom one has a responsibility, including employees and customers [11].

  - The fourth dimension of EI is **relationship management**. It encompasses the traits of being an inspirational leader; being persuasive; leading and nurturing subordinates appropriately; being a change agent; effectively managing conflict; motivating others; and being a team builder [12]. Boyatzis and Goleman (1999) identified the fourth dimension as social skills, with the subcategories of developing others, leadership, influence, communication, change catalyst, conflict management, building bonds, and teamwork and collaboration [12].

### The Importance of Using the Emotional Intelligence Skills for Tour Guides and Their Performance

Psychological literature over the last few years has contained several discussions about the possibility of the awareness of personal emotions and their management being extremely useful for personal issues and for interpersonal relationship, including professional relationships. The knowledge and management of one’s own emotions is called EI. Much research has been conducted on EI applications to the workplace, though very little research into the application of EI on tourism services has been conducted. Nevertheless, the authors believe that EI can be applied successfully to tourism in general and in the sector of tour guiding in particular, to improve the management of relationships with customers and the staff working in tourism sector and the tour guides [3].

Despite proven hypotheses confirming the importance of EI in the work environment, there is not, as yet, enough interest in the topic of EI among tourism scholars [22]. There is very little research into the application of EI on tourism services. These studies were conducted by Cavelzani et. al., (2003), Sy et. al. (2006), Halsell et. al. (2007), Prentice and King (2011).

In the study of Cavelzani et. al., (2003), was examined how, and to what extent, emotional intelligence can benefit the travel and tourism industry. Seven tour operators were interviewed to assess their attitudes, opinions and observations about emotional intelligence and its application to the relationship between tourists and residents of a community. Results showed that all tour operators, to a certain degree, utilized emotional intelligence to offer more personalized travel solutions for tourists. It was found that understanding the cultural values and social etiquette particular to each travel destination was essential for healthy tourist-resident relations.

Sy et. al. (2006) carried out a research to examine the relationships among employees’ EI, their manager’s EI, employees’ job satisfaction and performance for food service employees from the restaurants. They predicted and found that employees’ EI was positively associated with job satisfaction and performance.

Halsell et. al. (2007), carried out a research on the students in hospitality undergraduate programs. Using the dimensions of transformational
leadership and the domains of EI, a model was developed indicating the direct relationship between the two constructs. Additionally, a pilot study was conducted to demonstrate that students in hospitality undergraduate programs do not possess the level of EI needed to be successful transformational leaders.

Prentice and King (2011) explored the impact of EI on the service performance of frontline employees in the casino industry. The researchers test the hypothesis that EI is a predictor of the service performance of casino service representatives and the results confirmed that EI is a significant predictor of the service performance of casino frontline employees for the high-roller market.

Truly good hospitality services must inspire pleasant feelings in visitors and be the source of happy memories, such as the serenity of resting peacefully in an agritourism resort, the fairy tale enchantment of a suite in an ancient castle with frescos on the walls, the unique experience of staying in a luxury hotel, the unusually stimulating excitement of a specially designed hotel or of a bedroom. Every environment available to quests differs from the others (colours, lighting, materials, interior design, shape and design of objects, etc.). Therefore, different environments stimulate different emotions and feelings in visitors. On the other hand, the individuality of a guest determines whether he/she finds a particular environment attractive and pleasant: everybody has different needs, reasons and expectations at different times of their lives. Being aware of the features of an environment, why it is attractive, and what customers are looking for in a particular tourist resort can make a big difference to people working in the sector of tourism. Other than a particularly attractive environment, offering excellent hospitality also means offering high-quality service, which can satisfy the needs and requirements of customers and, at the same time, an understanding of what the customer wants before they ask, thus amazing them and allowing them to have a pleasantly unique and memorable time. With regard to this, the psychological theories of emotional intelligence can help improve the relationship with quests [3].

Mayer and Salovey (1997) defined EI as a set of interrelated skills concerning “the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth”. Put simply, they described that the emotionally intelligent person is skilled in four areas: (1) identifying emotions, (2) using emotions, (3) understanding emotions, and (4) regulating emotions [5]. The ability to manage, regulate, and control one’s emotions in order to interact with others effectively is one of the most essential skills in the tourism industry, which involves high-contact encounters and significant interaction among customers [22].

Because the tourism industry is characterized by high-contact encounters and considerable interaction with customers, it is especially crucial for professionals in this industry to have the ability to manage, regulate, and control their emotions in order to interact with others constructively and effectively. Goleman (1998) argues that customer service providers with good EI skills are more capable of getting positive responses from the people with whom they interact. Understanding individuals’ current EI levels is a significant first step for EI-related studies, because it provides a greater awareness of how individuals think, feel, and behave. Also Individuals who are emotionally intelligent may be more aware of their own feelings as well as the feelings of others, and such people are more capable of identifying and communicating them than less emotionally intelligent individuals. EI can be considered as a predictor of success because it reflects how individuals apply knowledge to immediate situations. In a way, to measure EI is to measure one’s ability to get along in the world [22].

Due to the fact that they act as intermediaries between tourists and an unfamiliar environment, tour guides play an important role in the success or failure of a tour experience; their performance may ultimately shape a tourist’s perception of the host destination [22]. The tourism literature has widely recognised that the service quality of the tour guide is a critical factor in achieving tourist satisfaction influencing travel operator’s reputation and word-of-mouth publicity and affecting the image and revisit intention of a destination [19].

According to the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA), a tour guide is defined as a person who ‘guides visitors in the language of their choice and interprets the cultural and natural heritage of an area which person normally possesses an area-specific qualification usually issued and recognised by the appropriate authority’ [27]. In practice, tour guides fulfil a wide variety of roles that are in-
terwoven and interactive. They also act as role models for appropriate behaviour [28]. Tour guides can act as information providers, pathfinders, health and safety officers, group leaders, heritage interpreters, environmental interpreters, educators, teachers, animators, mediators, mentors, catalysts, representatives and sales people [14], [7], [15], [29], [2].

Tour guides act as intermediaries between tourists and an unfamiliar environment, thus playing an important role in the success or failure of a tour experience and influencing tourists’ perceptions of the host destination. Because tour guides have such responsibility, for the overall satisfaction and impressions of tourists, the development of EI skills seems crucial for tour guides. They can use EI skills to both manage their own performance and to regulate tourists’ moods in order to most appropriately and effectively interact with them. EI skills involve managing emotions well both within oneself and in relationships, using skills to make good decisions and to act effectively, and becoming more efficient in coping with demands and pressures. EI skills can in particular be utilized successfully in jobs which normally contain high levels of emotional demand and a great deal of interaction with the customer, elements which closely match the description of a tour guide [21].

Conclusion

Tour guides shoulder very big duties and responsibilities in tourism sector and play an extremely important and diagnostic role on tourists’ remaining pleased with tour organization and travel experience, creating and presenting countries and countries’ image as it’s real and publicising countries’ people, culture, history, archeology, art, art history, economy, politics and current issues etc. Especially in tourism sector, there is a growing need for tour guides, not only in terms of their numbers, but also for their ability to provide high-quality service. A positive evaluation of the tour guide’s performance or minimizing the risk factors (such as occupational accidents and diseases) which affect the job satisfaction or job performance of the tour guides will increase tourist satisfaction, encouraging repeat visitation, passing the good words to friends or the purchasing of another tour through the same tour operator. For a guided tour, the tour operator, the tour guide and the visitor all contribute to shape the visitor’s experience. However, the success or failure of such an experience is highly dependent upon the tour guide, who plays the central role and act as the catalyst. The success of the service quality in the tourism industry very much depends on the performance of tour guides. A tour guide’s performance is a key factor in differentiating a tourism enterprise from its competitors. The tour guide’s performance within the service encounter not only affects the company image, customer loyalty and word-of-mouth communication but also it can be seen as a competitive factor. Destination governments and tourism industries are increasingly aware of the need to improve the service quality of the tour guiding profession; for instance, by investing in training programmes as well as quality assurance and regulatory mechanisms. Besides all these factors the tour guides must use EI skills or must learn to use EI skills in their working life. Because EI is being recognized as a significant factor in work and general life experiences, the development of EI skills is essential.

References


Asst. Prof. Ozlem KOROGLU (PhD)
University of Balikesir
School of Tourism and Hotel Management
Balikesir/TURKEY
Tel: +90 266 612 13 40
Fax: +90 266 612 13 57
E-Mail: ozlemkoroglu_98@yahoo.com

Asst. Prof. Ahmet KOROGLU (PhD)
University of Balikesir
School of Tourism and Hotel Management
Balikesir/TURKEY
Tel: +90 266 612 13 40
Fax: +90 266 612 13 57
E-Mail: ahmet_koroglu@yahoo.com