A Study of Tour Guide Competency, Service Quality, and Tourist Satisfaction of Chinese Tourist

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Abstract

This study aim to investigate the effect of Thai tour guide's competency level of service quality in providing satisfaction service for Chiness tourists. Specifically, the objectives of this quatitive study were 1) to confirm factors of level of tour guide competency , service quality, and tourist satisfaction and 2) to study the effect of tour guide competency attributes on level of service quality, and level of service quality on tourist satisfaction. A self-administered questionnaire (closed-ended questionnaire) was developed and utilized to collect data from 400 purposively selected Chinese tourists who participating in guided tours in Bangkok. The collected data were then analyzed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and AMOS programs for analyze Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentages were calculated to define the demographic profile of the respondents. The two-stage approach was applied to estimate the proposed conceptual framework and plausible hypothesis. In the first step, a measurement model was estimated and followed by Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to assess overall fit of the proposed model and to test hypotheses. Finally, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is employed to assess the measurement model.

According to the results, the majority of the respondents were female (53.00%), between18-35 years of age (78.70%), single (60.50%), finished education below bachelor degree (49.20%), and 31.20% of them were students. In regarding to the tour guide competency attributes, the study found that Skill (DE=.76) Knowledge (DE=.25), Ethic (DE=.13), and Attribute (DE=.08) were all at high level and ranked respectively in that order. The study found that the structural model of tour guide’s competency and service quality has a strong influence on tourist’s satisfaction. The results revealed that competency attributes of tour guides have a positive direct effect to the service quality level. Similarly, service quality levels have positive direct effect to the satisfaction level. Thus, the research suggested a development of guidelines for Tour Company and travel agencies in recruiting tour guides and train them for the competency required. In addition, guidelines for

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government sectors or related agencies should also be developed toinclude tour guide's standards in the area of knowledge, skills, attributes, and ethics related to the work position and appropriate with Chinese tourists.

Keywords: Competency, Service Quality, Tourist Satisfaction

Introduction

Thailand is one of the most Chinese tourists' destination. Due to, many natural attractions and resources, together with a unique cultures as well as the location which does not take long from China. As a result, Thailand become a popular destination for Chinese tourist's ranked no.1 in Asia (Kasikorn Research Center, 2016).Chinese tourists have dramatically changed their behavior recently due to better skill of English, consider more of value proposition and more independent. There are two types of Chinese tourists, travelling independently and package-tour trip. A newcomer Chinese tourists often choose to package-tour trip, to be comfortable with a Chinese-speaking guide stay with the tour group and the package-tour will has the flights, accommodations and show-tickets costs all included (Chinese International Travel Monitor, 2016). The people who affect the tourism and represent the country to impress the tourists is the tour guide. Therefore, tour guides are an important element to make the tour business and the tourism industry to become successful. In addition to interesting attractions and the convenience of traveling, tour guides play an important role of creating satisfaction and a good image to the country as well (Sujarinphong, 2016).

As frequently shown on news that Thailand confront a problem of Tour guide with Chinese tourist such as; Tour guide charged extra in addition to the tour package and cause dissatisfaction to the tourists. Moreover, there are also behavior of taking additional extra charge and abandon any tourist who refuse to pay as shown Kositphiphat (2018).

Previously government agencies set the measures to develop quality tour guides. By Ministry Tourism and Sports of Thailandset a standard for tour guide, for the first time in 2008 to improve the qualities of tour guide's development of standard.In addition, Occupational Standard and Professional Qualifications prepare a profession standard which is the specification of the competency level for the person to work in the field of the profession of guides in Thailand.

The tourists come from different cultural societies and also has different preference of service quality, gift souvenir, travel style and pattern, criticism, product loyalty and satisfaction with the service (Hofstede, 2001). The competency of guides has been determine presently but there is

no specific guideline and service standard for Chinese tourists. According to Derera & Eshetie (2017) state that the study confirms the absence of a professional as well as a local tour guiding quality assurance and regulatory mechanisms and standards. Although numerous types of standards and quality assurance systems with relevance to tour guiding exist, none directly address the range of qualifications and experience necessary for excellent travel guiding.Therefore the researcher needs to study the competencyattribute of the guides that affect to the service quality of Chinese tourists and Chinese tourist's satisfaction.

Objective

1) to confirm tour guide competency, service quality, and tourist satisfaction factors

2) to study the effect of tour guide competency attributes on level of service quality and level of service quality on tourist satisfaction

Conceptual framwork

This study explored the following objectives; 1) to confirm tour guide competency , service quality, and tourist satisfaction factors and 2) to study the effect of tour guide competency attributes on level of service quality, and level of service quality on tourist satisfaction. In order to accomplish the objectives of the study, a model was designed, showing

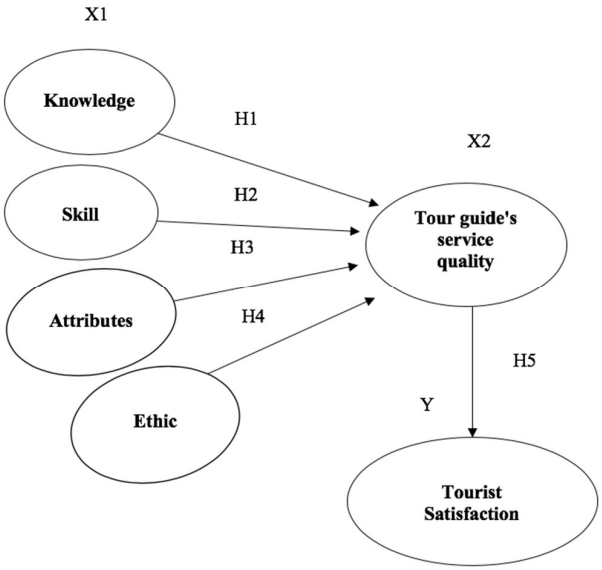

Figure 1: conceptual framwork

Literature review

Competency

The competency refers to the behavioral attributes that result from the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other attributes that make a person perform better than his or her colleagues in the organizationrequired in order to fulfill their own jobs. It is the requirement to successfully accomplish the goals of job. McClelland (1973) proposed the term "competency" and indicated that intelligence (i.e. knowledge and skills) is not the only factor to determine job performance. Attitude, cognition and personality traits are also the underlying factors to achieve excellent job performance. For a tour guides, professional knowledge refers to tour guides' understandings required when guiding tour groups.Competencies are mainly associated with individuals' jobs. It is the professional knowledge, skills and attitude required for a person when playing a specific role in his or her professional job to fulfill the responsibility in an organization (Lin, 2017).

The government agency in Thailand established standard in guiding career by setting The Standard Indicators Framework consists of Department of Tourism (Department of Tourism, 2016), and Thailand Professional Qualification Institute. The government agency refer to the competencyfor tour guideconsist ofKnowledge components in tourism industry and services, Foreign language and Thai language proficiency, knowledge of Thailand, Thai Identity, Thai history and cultural. (Tourism Business and Guide Act, 2016). Knowledge of tourism in a sustainable manner, knowledge of safety in tourism and finally knowledge of the roles, responsibilities and ethics of the guides. Skillin performing roles and responsibilities consisting of the pre-treatment of tourist transportation on both way, the operation toward the end of the trip, Facilitate tourists with the willingness to take care of their welfare and safety. Skillfully solving problem, with good manners and dress appropriately. Ethics in the profession of guides consisting of respectful to National, Religion and Monarch. Faithful in Democratic Governante, Adhere to religion, comprehend the duty, be responsible, be faithful and love in profession. The competency attributes of the study were selected through the related competency literature review. In the review of the competency literature, the selected attributes were knowledge, skill, attribute and ethic.

Service quality

Kotler (1997) defined service as 'an action or an activity which can be offered by a party to another party, which is basically intangible and cannot affect any ownership. Service may be related to tangible product or intangible product' service quality means the Indicates level of difference between expectations expected by the service provider before accessing the service and the level

of satisfied perception received by consumer from the service provider. If the service can meet the requirements directly or more than expectation then the service is good quality. If the service can meet the requirements less than expectation then the service is poor quality.

One of the most useful measurements of service quality is the dimensions from the SERVQUAL model. In the creation of this model for the very first time, (Parasuraman, Zeithmal &Berry, 1985). The new scale of service quality SERVQUAL contain five dimension as following: (Parasuramam, Ziethaml & Berry, 1988) consist 1) the tangibles encompass the appearance of the company representatives, facilities, materials, and equipment as well as communication materials. 2) reliability and consistency of performance of service facilities, goods and staff is seen as important. This includes punctual service delivery and ability to keep to agreements made with the customer 3) responsiveness as the speed and timeliness of service delivery. This includes the speed of throughput and the ability of the service to respond promptly to customer service requests, with minimal waiting and queuing time. 4) assurance dimension includes the following features: competence to perform the service, politeness and respect for the customer, effective communication with the customer and the general attitude that the server has the customer's best interest at heart and 5) Empathy is the provision of caring, individualized attention to customers.Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons (2001) posit that empathy includes approachability, sensitivity, and effort to understand the customer's needs.

Relationship between Competencies Service qualities

Parasuraman, Zeithmal & Berry (1985) define service quality as the degree of differences between the normative expectations of customers regarding services and their perceptions regarding service performance (Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithmal, 1991). SERVQUAL is comprised of five dimensions: tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Studies have shown SERVQUAL to be moreaccurate in identifying service shortfalls and deficiencies within an organization, as compared to other instruments. From the study following hypotheses are the proposed: H1: Knowledge positively associated with service quality. H2: Skill are positively associated with the service quality. H3: Attribute are positively associated with service quality and H4: Ethics are positively associated with service quality

Tourist Satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction is the ration between tourists' real feelings after the travel and their expectations before the travelling**.** The Satisfaction means anything that can lessen human tension and those tensions are the result of human needs. When humans need more, they will react.

Whenever the demand is fulfilled. The tension is less or loss, satisfaction is there. The meaning of satisfaction and satisfaction of tourists enough to conclude that tourist satisfaction is a feeling and good personal attitude resulting from travel. The more satisfied a traveler is, the more likely they are to enjoy the trip before the journey and the perception of the goods and services after the trip.The composition of service satisfaction are divided into two parts (Dechakub,2000)which is: 1) Composition of service products quality acknowledgement. Consumer will recognize that the service product received is naturally commitment of each type of service as it should be or not and 2) Composition of service provider quality acknowledgement. Consumer will recognize how very suitable the procedure of service provide by service provider, whether it is convenient to access the service, behavior of service provider on role and reaction response, the responsibility for the job, the use of language to convey meaning and service operation.

Service quality relationship between tourist satisfactions

Service quality has been generally accepted as one of the factors affecting tourist satisfaction Gounaris, Stathakopoulos & Athanassopoulos (2003) revealed that service quality has significant impact and positive relationship with customer satisfaction in Greek retailing industry.Oliver (1980) studied the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in Malaysian rural tourism; they found that service quality has significant impact and positive relationship with customer satisfaction.

According to Lin (2017) they studied How Tour Guides' Professional Competencies Influence on Service Quality of Tour Guiding and Tourist Satisfaction: Exploratory Research. Empirical data were gathered from a large-scale online survey with 345 experienced group package tour (GPT) tourists to test the proposed hypotheses and research model. The proposed conceptual framework was validated using the partial least squares (PLS) technique. The empirical results indicate that tour guides' professional competencies significantly impact on service quality and tourist satisfaction. The results also show that tour guides' service quality positively influences tourist satisfaction. The findings provide insight into practical implications for the competence development of tour guides and proffer instrumental contributions to help travel agencies strengthen tour guides' professional competences for effectively enhancing service quality of tour guiding and improving tourist satisfaction. From the study following hypothesis are the proposed. H5: Tour guide's service quality are positively associated with tourist satisfaction.

Research Methodology

This research adopted a quantitative research. Study the level of competency attributes of tour guideand to develop the Structural Equation Model of Tour guide's competenciesattribute, tour guide's service quality and Tourist's satisfaction. The researcher collected data from Chinese Tourists whoexperience on participating tour with tour guide in Bangkok, aged up to 18 years old. The sampling technique is using probability sampling; it is used to give a chance to every unit equally. With the method "Simple Random Sampling" by drawing the lots with non-returnable,the researcher selected the tour companies fromList of Thai - Chinese tour operation companies in Bangkok and random the tour company and selected 10 companies to distribute the 400 questionnaire (40 collect per company) (Department of Tourism, 2017)

The study analyzed which tour guide's competencies attribute and develop structural equation modeling for tour guide's competency attribute , service quality and chinese tourist satisfaction with experience on participating tour with tour guides in Bangkok province. The questionnaire uses in this study consisted of 4parts. All the part were measured by five piont Likert scale. Likert scales were very useful and commonly used in survey research to determine what respondents think.The data of this study are coded and analyzed in using SPSS and AMOS programs for analyze Structural Equation Modeling.

Firstly, descriptive statistics were evaluated to define the demographic profile. The two-stage approach was applied to estimate the proposed conceptual framework and plausible hypotheses. A measurement model was estimated before the structural model. Structural equation modeling (SEM) will be conducted to assess overall fit of the proposed model and test hypotheses. Thus, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is employed to assess the measurement model.

Result

Table1 Demographic profile of respondents

General Data	Number	Percentage
Gender		
Male	188	47.00
Female	212	53.00
Age		
Below 25 years	157	39.30
25 – 35 years	158	39.40
Above 35 years	85	21.30
Status		
Single	242	60.50
Married/ live together	152	38.00
Divorce/ Separated	6	1.50
Education		
Below Bachelor degree	197	49.20
Bachelor degree	195	48.80
Above Bachelor degree	6	1.50
Other	2	0.50
Occupation		
Student/ College	125	31.20
Government	55	13.80
Company Employee	114	28.50
Business owner	96	24.00
Other	10	2.50

The table 1 present the number of the respondents answering the questionnaire. Could be summarized that among 400 respondents, there are 212 males (53.00%) and female 188 (47.00%). In this table show age below 25 years are 157 (39.40%) and 25 – 35 years 158 (39.40%) respondentsand 85(21.30%) respondents above 35 years. In this table show status, illustrates most respondents 242 (60.50%) single, 152 (38.00%) married or live together, and 6 (1.50%) divorce or separated. For Education most respondent 197 (49.20%) finished below bachelor degree, followed by bachelor degree 195 (48.80%), Above bachelor degree 6 (1.50%) persons, and there is 10 (0.50%) people of the respondents finished ohter. For Occupation

could be summarized that the majority of respondens 125 (31.20%) are student followed by company employee 114 (28.50%) persons, business owner 96 (24.00%) person, and Government 55 (13.80%) persons, other occupation 10 (2.50%)

Result of Objective 1: 1) to confirm factors of level of tour guide competency , service quality, and tourist satisfaction

Table 2 Mean and Standard Deviation of Competencies (n=400)

Variable	Items	Mean	SD
Tour guide competencies	TGC		
Knowledge	TGC1	3.85	.64
Skill	TGC2	4.24	.68
Attribute	TGC3	3.44	.58
Ethic	TGC4	3.50	.51

Table 2present theMean and standard deviation of competencies The results show that there is a higher degree are skill 4.24 (SD= .68) and the second are knowledge 3.85 (S=D =.64) and third attribute 3.50 (SD= .58) and the less are ethic 3.44 (SD =.51)

Table 3 Mean and Standard Deviation of Service Quality of Tour Guide and Tourist's Satisfaction

Variable	Items	Mean	SD
Service quality of tour guide	SQ		
A tour guide should provide services according to a tourist's need.	SQ1	3.57	1.01
A tour guide should be enthusiastically giving information to tourists.	SQ2	3.77	.98
A tour guide should be fully equipped with travelling kits.	SQ3	4.11	.87
A tour guide should response to tourist's needs quickly.	SQ4	3.36	.93
A tour guide should provide services according to a tourist's need.	SQ5	3.97	.88

Table 3 (per)

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A tour guide should provide services according to a tourist's need.	SQ5	3.97	.88
Tourist Satisfaction	TS		
In what extent, do you satisfy the tour arrangement of the guide	TS1	4.45	.76
In what extent, do you satisfy the tour guide's coordination	TS2	4.12	.92
The tour guide's willingness to service	TS3	4.00	1.03
In the future, in what extent, you will take the tour guide.	TS4	4.60	.65

Table 3 Present the Service Quality of Tour Guide and Tourist Satisfaction. Service Quality of Tour Guide, mean value of SQ1 SQ2 SQ3 SQ4 and SQ5 are 3.57 (SD = 1.01), 3.77 (SD = 0.98), 4.11 (SD = 0.87), 3.36 (SD = 0.93) and 3.97 (SD = 0.88) respectively.

Tourist Satisfaction, mean value of TS1 TS2 TS3 and TS4 are 4.45 (SD = 0.76), 4.12 (SD = 0.92), 4.00 (SD = 1.03) and 4.60 (SD = 0.65) respectively.

This objective Measurement model was estimated using the maximum likelihood estimation method. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is examined to note how the research model fit with the data collected from the sample and construct reliability and validity

(Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Therefore, CFA is employed to confirm the factor loading of the 3 constructs introduced with 13 items. There are 5 hypotheses.

Table 4 Estimated Indices of measurement model of Tour Guide Competencies constructs

Variable	Label	β	*SE*	*C.R*	R^2
Knowledge	TGC1	.67	-	-	.40
Skill	TGC2	.56	.13	7.03	.36
Attribute	TGC3	.60	.10	8.62	.32
Ethic	TGC4	.63	.12	7.58	.45
χ^2= .741, df = 1, $\chi 2/df$ = .741, p = .39, RMSEAR = .00, NFI = 1.00, CFI = 1.00, GFI = 1.00, AGFI = .99					

Table 4 Shows Confirmatory Factor Analysis model of Tour Guide Competencies. The model is significantly positive. The overall fit measure, the signs, and significant levels of all indicate the fit of the full model is acceptable. The result showed that Knowledge has highest factor loading (β = .67) followed by Ethic (β = .63, *C.R* = 7.58),Attribute (β = .56, *C.R* = 8.62), and Skill (β = .56, *C.R* = 7.03).

Result of objective 2

The objective: 2 to study the effect of tour guide competency attributes on level of service quality, and level of service quality on tourist satisfaction

Table 5 Service quality of tour guide's CFA results

Variable	SQ			TS			Ranking
	TE	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	
Knowledge	.25	.25	-	-	-	-	2
Skill	.76	.76	-	-	-	-	1
Attribute	.08	.08	-	-	-	-	4
Ethic	.13	.13	-	-	-	-	3
SQ				.75	.75	-	
R^2		.97			.56		
χ^2= 88.38, df= 56,$\chi 2/df$ = 1.92, CFI=.97, GFI=.97, RMSEA=.048							

Table 5 show the testing overall fit of all constructs of Tour Guide Competencies, Service Quality, and Tourist Satisfaction were tested at once in AMOS.

Table 6 Conclusion of the hypothesis

Hypothesis Testing	No.	Hypothesis	StatisticalTesting	Results
	H1	Knowledge positively associated with service quality	Path analysis	Supported
	H2	Skill are positively associated with service quality	Path analysis	Supported
	H3	Attribute arepositively associated with service quality	Path analysis	Supported
	H4	Ethics are positively associated with service quality	Path analysis	Supported
	H5	Tour guides' service quality are positively associated with tourist satisfaction	Path analysis	Supported

Table 6 and Figure 2 show the results all of hypothesis positively associated.

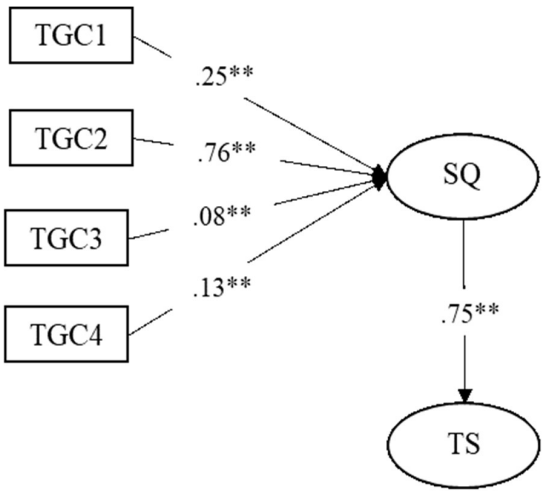

Figure 2: Path model of tourist satisfaction

The result, Tour guides' service quality positively associated with tourist satisfaction (DE = .75). And Tour guides' service quality positively associated. The ranking show The results show that higher degree are skillSkill (DE = .76)and the second are knowledge (DE = .25), and third, Ethic (DE = .13) and attribute (DE = .08)

Discussion

From the study found that level of skill of tour guide is highest such as skillfull in chinese language and communication, skillfull in promblem sloving , time management , responding tourist's needs, understand tourist's thought and promblem menagement. The secound is knowledge of tour guide. Tour guideshoud have a good command in language, knowlede about tourism business, knowledge and understand about the tourist attraction, understand the airport's rule and regulation, should know how to first aid and should be literatte in IT for tourism. When Chinese travel agencies recruit or select tour guides, they should first concern about tour guides' knowledge with the support of skills. The Chinese tourism industry is the business in which Chinese tourist. Positive knowledge skills attribute and ethic can bridge the gaps among tourists, tour guides and travel agencies

According to McClelland 1973) state that knowledge and skill is the floating part above water can be easily to observe. show in the figure 2 This figure shown competency attributes of tour guide for Chinese's tourist. Of all the components of the competency, you can see skill and knowledge that only the two floating parts above water can be observe. As for the ethic and attribute is complicated to acknowledge because it takes time and many variation of each person. Therefore, learning about the competency means to observe the behavior and as well as the source of that behavior.

In this research finding can serve as instrumental guideline for tour company, travel agencies to recruit tour guide and make training for the competency development of tour guides and instrumental guideline for government or relate department to development tour guide's standard for appropriate with Chinese's tourist According to (Parry 1977) definition of competency is a related knowledge, skills and attributes which affect the main job of a position. By means of the knowledge, skills and features relate to the work of that position. It can be measured against acceptable standards. And it can be built through training and development.

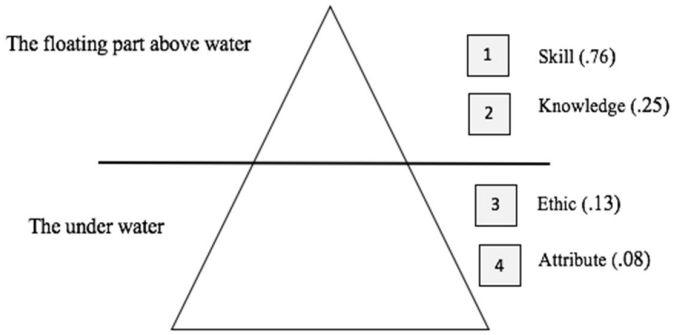

Figure 3: Simulates' Iceberg Model of Competencies as follow: (McClelland, 1973)

Recommendation

Based on the findings the competency attributes for tour guide will have a positive direct effect to the service quality level in relation to tour guide's competency. Therefore should importance to develop service quality and the effort in raising their level of proficiency and professionalism will benefit the tourism industry with greater potential for higher profits and greater efficiency. Professional skills in presentation guide has knowledge of the destinations and inform visitors about destinations. According to the result show the service quality level in relation to tour guide's competency will have a positive direct effect to the satisfaction level therefore should importance to appear to be honest and trustworthy and respectful towards tourists and should important to foster and enhance the performance of this force to reach a higher level of Chinese Tourists satisfaction.

According to The Mutual Recognition Arrangement on Tourism Professionals (ASEAN, 2018) on Tourism Professionals seeks to increase the international mobility of tourism labor across the ASEAN region in line with ASEAN policy. Each ASEAN nation has its own standards, certification and regulations for recognizing the competency of workers in the tourism sector . The government should be aware about competency standards set down the specific knowledge and skills required for successful performance in the workplace and the required standard of performance because tourists come from different cultural societies and also has different preference of service quality.

This study uses the probability sampling method and purposive sampling from Chinese Tourists who participant with tour guide in Bangkok 400 samples surveys, it is not representative from a statistical point of view, so for future study, with more time and budget, future researchers may take a random sampling that each member of that population has an equal probability of being selected, In addition, the researcher focuses would ask to propose the trend of studying related variables other factors to factors affecting tour guide's competency to service quality and tourists satisfaction.

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