# Tourist Guides as Representatives of Sustainable Tourism:
## Evidence From Turkey

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*The main purpose of this research is to find out tourist guides' contributions to sustainable tourism. It is planned to apply qualitative research method by using interpretive content analysis in phenomenological design. "Using the positive effects of green and sea on people" and "using spices that will interest the group, for example anise" are some of the answers describing tourist guides' leadership (instrumental) roles. "Talking to the villagers and transfer a lot of information to group" and "explain the nature of the region and explaining how the people living there adapt to this nature" are some of the answers of tour guides describing tourist guides' leadership (social) roles. "Giving information about what is famous in the Dardanelles region and go to the tasting" and "if there has been a family who makes tomato paste in the region certainly to let them to get experience" are some of the answers of tour guides describing tourist guides' mediator roles.*

## INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry, which is largely labor intensive (Grobelna, 2017; Kim and Park, 2013), and today one of the most developed industries in the world (Baherli and Sucuoglu, 2015), also it is considered by many countries as a means of economic development (Kuo et al., 2018). Some studies have suggested that tourism industry can contribute to conserving natural areas by supporting development of ecotourism and related fields, such as alternative, sustainable and responsible tourism (Blamey, 1997; Orams, 1999; Randall & Rollins; 2009). Tourist guides are professionals involved in shaping tourists'

first impressions of destinations, and the role of memorable travel experiences they provide for each tourist in the development of sustainable tourism is critical (Kuo, et al., 2018).

The purpose of this study is to try to understand how licensed tourist guides from Turkey, define their roles within the scope of sustainable tourism. In order to evaluate the assumed roles, the participants were asked about semi-structured questions in the framework of social and instrumental leadership, mediating between local culture and tourists, ensuring behavior towards protecting the environment and economically supporting the local people.

## BACKGROUND

## Tour Guiding and Guiding in Turkey

In the definition of tourist guidance according to The International Forum of Travel and Tourism Advocates (IFFTA) is emphasized interpretation role of tourist guide. According to IFFTA a tourist guide is the person who makes the interpretation of the archeology, history, natural environment and cultural knowledge to the tourists. (IFFTA, 2019). Federation of Tourist Guide Association's definition of tourist guidance is focused in a tourist guide's providing services and experience to tourists (FEG, 2019). According to FEG, "*tourist guiding has developed for decades as a distinct profession within the tourism industry alongside other complimentary professions that also contribute to the visitors' overall experience*" (FEG, 2019). World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA), makes the definition of the tourist guiding profession by using their ability of knowledge of foreign languages and criteria of interpreting tourism sources of the tourist guides (WFTGA, 2019).

While making the definitions of the tourist guidance profession of these important institutions, which we can say that they represent tourist guides in international platforms, they have used the foreign language skills of the guides, their ability to transfer information about nature and cultural heritage to the tourist as the basic criteria in their definitions.

Interpretation of tourist guides plays an important role in satisfying tourists and showing destination loyalty, but they also have some kind of teaching roles that enable tourists to analyze the cultural characteristics of the destination they experience (Cheng, et al., 2018). While tourist guides have a critical importance in linking the destination with their visitors, their importance in the development of the local tourism industry in most destinations cannot be denied, and the quality of service provided by guides to tourists not only contributes to the business development of the travel agencies, but also improves the image of the destination (Chang, 2014; Mak, et al., 2011; Huang, et al, 2010). Tourist guides not only ensure the health and safety of tourists, but also help them to enjoy a rich sightseeing experience, and they have an important role in evaluating the tourists' own travels as well as the performance of the guide (Kuo, et al., 2016). While tour guides have an active role in ensuring all the impressions and satisfaction of a tour on tourists, their main responsibility is to lead the group to solve problems, and a secondary role is to make entrepreneurship by avoiding short-term profits such as tips and commissions (Tsaur, et al., 2018; Heung, 2008). According to Serenari, et al., (2012) and Randall & Rollins, (2009) firstly, Cohen's (1985) classification of the tourist guides' roles as pathfinder and mentor on the basis of historical and modern roles influenced the subsequent researchers, for example Weiler & Davis (1993) reformed Cohen's (1985) classification and suggested their role as motivator and environmental interpreters (Serenari, et al., 2012).

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