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First International Research Forum  
on Guided Tours - Proceedings

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Managing Big Cities



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## Welcome to the proceedings from the First International Research Forum on Guided Tours!

Since the empirical phenomenon of Guided tours involves several aspects, such as tourism, sustainable spatial planning, cultural heritage, the mediation of place through technologies, place marketing and management, Guided tours is a topic well suited for interdisciplinary studies. With this in mind, the first International Research Forum on Guided Tours was hosted by Halmstad University, Sweden on April 23-25<sup>th</sup> 2009.

The conference in Halmstad was a result of a Nordic workshop on Guided Tours that was held at Gothenburg Research Institute in 2007, and which also resulted in a book entitled “Guiding and Guided Tours” edited by Petra Adolfsson, Peter Dobers and Mikael Jonasson (ISBN 978-91-7246-285-4).

To the conference came a number of delegates from all over the world, from various disciplines and with different experiences of Guided Tours – some were practicing guides, others had various experiences of having been guided on tours. During the course of the conference, interesting presentations were held with empirical material from New Zealand, USA, Turkey, England, Belgium, Iceland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland, and a loose network was established in the hope of sometime in the future meeting again at a 2<sup>nd</sup> Research Forum of Guided Tours, inviting yet other academics and practitioners to discuss Guided Tours theoretically and practically.

In relation to this conference, the *Scandinavian Journal of Tourism and Hospitality* has planned a special issue (eds Mikael Jonasson and Petra Adofsson and Malin Zillinger), to which some of the delegates have submitted their papers, but in this report we have gathered some of the reviewed papers that were presented at the conference in Halmstad. Here, there are papers on the intercultural aspects of being a guide and of co-performing guiding (Nicolai Scherle & Hsiang-te Kung and Jane Widtfeldt Meged) as well as the “misguided tour” as a way to upheave the discourse created in the standard tour (Phil Smith). There are papers on tourist guide training (Stefán Helgi Valsson) as well as on tour-guides’ failure of delivering what tourists want (Räikkönen & Cortez Monto). And finally, there is a paper on the how showing respect at the guided tour of a mosque reproduces inequalities (Gunnarsson). All together these papers show a range of the different aspect that can be used when aiming for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of guided tours.

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# Cosmopolitans of the 21st Century? Conceptualising tour guides as intercultural mediators

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## Introduction

“Whether,” as Schütze (1999: 26) points out, “one follows old trails or enters new territory, the destination of any trip is foreign.” This foreign place is not only difficult to comprehend; it needs to be discovered, courted, preserved and acknowledged. In other words, one has to work at it. For all that, we are deeply convinced – at least since the emergence of the Grand Tour – that foreignness can be overcome by travelling. Why is the world elsewhere different? How is it different? And what can we as travellers learn from this experiential context? The history of travelling has always taught us that collective and individual identities develop out of processes of mutual reflection and identification and are in turn influenced by these processes. Neither the collective nor the individual identity is predetermined; they are formed through relationships to others. Leed (1993: 33) writes in this context: “The history of travel suggests that collective and individual identities arise from and are transformed by processes of mutual reflection, identification, and recognition in human relationships; that neither collective nor personal identities are implicit in the organism or the collective but arise from relations to others.” The reconciliation of native and foreign, own and other, is thus a constitutive feature of any journey in an intercultural context.

With reference to these introductory reflections, the following article argues that the tour guide is not only the most important link between tour operators, incoming agencies and tourists who translates the company’s philosophy into action on location, but who also acts as a crucial “intercultural mediator” to gain access to other cultures, as this profession is more deeply embedded in the dialectic of “own” and “other”

by virtue of its self-perception than any other. The article focuses on the empirical findings of two studies by Scherle (2007) and Nonnenmann (2007) in which the “hinge” function of tour guides between tour operators, incoming agencies and tourists is examined in a bilateral context and primarily from an intercultural perspective:

The first study by Scherle (2007) examines the role that tour operators and incoming-agencies ascribe to tour guides in their bilateral co-operations. Referring to the example of German tour operators and Moroccan incoming agencies this will include an analysis of the extent to which intercultural training measures are undertaken by the relevant businesses for tour guides; an aspect which has gained tremendously in significance in the context of the debates on intercultural competence as a factor for success (Adler, 2003; Maznevski & Lane, 2003; Reisinger & Turner, 2003).

The second study by Nonnenmann (2007) focuses on the perception of tour guides by participants in educational tours, assuming that this clientele is particularly motivated by the desire to become acquainted with different cultures (Smith, 2003; Weiss, 2003). Her study also analysed selected aspects of job specification and occupational image of tour guides; a topic, which is – at least explicitly – due to its complexity not part of the following article.

The central purpose of this article is to connect the complex constructs of ‘cosmopolitanism’ and ‘intercultural competence’ with tour guides; a profession, which is like no other embedded into the dialectic of own and other by moving back and forth between divergent cultures and developing a distinctly cosmopolitan lifestyle. Although these topics have gained more and more influence in the context of recent globalisation discourses, they have been rather neglected by the tourism scientific community. To apply the conceptual link between tour guides on the one hand and ‘cosmopolitanism’ and ‘intercultural competence’ on the other hand is the main goal in the following article, which not only addresses tourism researchers but also a broader scientific community in the social sciences. From an interdisciplinary perspective we hope to stimulate a discussion that enables to see this crucial profession in a new light.

Despite the prominent role that tour guides play in the system of tourism, fairly scanty scientific attention has been paid to them so far. Although various theoretical and application-oriented aspects of the role of tour guides have been examined since Cohen’s (1985) much discussed essay (e.g. Katz, 1985; Pond, 1993; Schmeer-Sturm, 2001; Schmidt, 1979), intercultural issues were frequently only mentioned fleetingly or remained implicit. One only has to call to mind the studies by Dahles (2002), Fine & Speer (1985), Günter (2003), Gurung et al. (1996), Holloway (1981) and Weier (2000). This circumstance is all the more

surprising when one considers that tourist services in particular embody globalisation in many aspects demonstrate an intercultural dimension in this context (Mosedale, 2006; Scherle, 2004). While Dahles' (2002) essay on "The Politics of Tour Guiding" questions the mediatory function as argued by Cohen (1985), using the example of Indonesia, many authors expect a renaissance of this mediatory function in the face of growing intercultural challenges (Jack & Phipps, 2005) and also in the context of the cosmopolitan concept.

Finally, the extent to which the concept of cosmopolitanism can be applied to tour guides will be discussed – especially in the context of a professional and private self-perception which Friedman (1994) perceptively describes as "participating in many worlds, without becoming part of them."

The following remarks will deal with selected aspects of the crucial role played by tour guides in the tourism system. According to their professional self-image, tour guides operate between cultures like almost no other professional group in tourism. Hence in the course of their professional activities they naturally play the role of intercultural mediators. With this in mind they can be termed cosmopolitans in an ideal sense. A section is also devoted to such reflections, before selected quotations are presented that capture some perspectives of representatives of tour operators and of tourists who have participated in study tours, in a separate empirical section. In this context the focus will be on the tour guide's function as intercultural mediator.

## Conceptualising cosmopolitanism and intercultural competence

Deriving from the Greek expression *kosmopolitês*, citizen of the world, the terminus has been used to describe a heterogenous range of important views mainly in a philosophical, anthropological and socio-political context. Fostered by the postmodern mix of boundaries between cultures and identities, accelerated by the dynamics of capital and consumption, empowered by capitalism undermining social movements, and encouraged by the evidence of world-wide communication, the cosmopolitan gaze opens and increasingly demands an inter-cultural or trans-cultural perspective (Beck et al., 1994; Beck, 2000). Since "Cosmopolitanism is a protean term with a complex history" (Mehta, 2000: 620), the following annotations focus primarily on contemporary literature on cosmopolitanism. However, according to Gunesch (2005), three periods can be distinguished, in which the concept of cosmopolitanism was particularly intensively debated: firstly, the time of the Greek Stoics of the first and second century BC, secondly, the 17th



and 18th century, and thirdly, the early 1990s (Heater, 1996; Kant, 1784; Schlereth, 1977; Skribis et al., 2004).

Cosmopolitanism should not simply be reduced to global citizenship reminding of Mannheim's (1936/1990) idea of the free-floating intellectual, it can be seen in the sense of Brennan as lifestyle choices; according to him cosmopolitanism "designates an enthusiasm for customary differences, but as ethical or aesthetic material for a unified polychromatic culture – a new singularity born of blending and merging of multiple local constituents." (Brennan 2001: 76).

The most evident link between cosmopolitanism and tourism is the aspect of global mobilities (Molz, 2006; Urry, 2004). In that context most authors refer to the example of the tourist as the personal embodiment of mobility, whereas labour mobility still plays a marginal role (King, 1995; Nonnenmann, 2007; Riley, 2005). In this context, we should not forget that – as Sheller and Urry (2004: 3) argue – these global mobilities "presuppose the growth of 'tourism reflexivity', a system of governance that ensures that increasing numbers of places around the world monitor evaluate, and develop their 'tourism potential.' This reflexivity involves identifying a place's location within the contours of geography, history, and culture that swirl around the globe, and locating their actual and potential material *and* semiotic resources." Unfortunately – as Gunesch (2005) has pointed out – by far the greater body of literature still sees cosmopolitanism and tourism as polarities, and does not suggest either any variation in these extremes, nor any possible forms or stages of development between them.

Before we have a closer look at tour guides as intercultural mediators and cosmopolitans the following table comprises from a general point of view the most important aspects of cosmopolitanism:

*Table 1. Cosmopolitanism in a nutshell*

■	a straddling of the "global" and the "local" spheres, with a decisive impact of the global ("world citizen")
■	a <i>connaissance</i> with respect to (local) cultural diversity wherever possible, otherwise an interested "dilettantism";
■	a general willingness and openness towards engagement with cultural diversity, which yet allows for "dislike";
■	the mobility to travel, with a discussion about whether this is sufficient;
■	a notion of "home" that can be extremely varied, while it is no longer undisputedly it also is not "everywhere";
■	a critical attitude towards the (native) nation –state, which can range between "rooted" and "unrooted" identity expressions.

*Source: Developed by the author*

The following part of the article links the concept of cosmopolitanism with tour guides with special reference to their role as intercultural mediators.

## Tour guides as intercultural mediators and cosmopolitans

As intimated in the beginning, tour guides definitely play a role as mediator between cultures, particularly from the perspective of companies offering study tours; in many cases intercultural mediation is indeed seen as their main responsibility. As Schrutka-Rechtenstamm (1999: 101) points out in the context of her reflections on intercultural relationships in tourism:

It is necessary to understand the reality of the culture through which one is travelling and to break open the boundaries to the other culture. The tourists expect an authentic view and the words true and genuine become key words as soon as the boundary between workaday world and holiday trip has been crossed [translation by the author].

The function of tour guides as intercultural mediators arises from the circumstance that they, more than almost any other occupational group, must try to accommodate own and other, native and foreign (Scherle, 2007). Through their travel activities and their intercultural functions, tour guides are directly exposed to cultural influences at the local, regional and global level. As “wanderers between the worlds” (Nonnenmann, 2004) it is their task to awaken understanding for the other and to sensitize their guests to cultural differences and similarities. In this context they should also be conscious of their own personal cultural and social identity. Especially on study trips, which are generally accompanied for a fairly long period of time by the same tour guide, it is essential to be aware of the expectations, needs, wishes or travel motives of the guests. A rule of thumb is: the more intensively the group relates to the guide, the greater his influence on intercultural encounters, and it is these that determine the success of the holiday trip (Kösterke, 2003).

Even if, in the ideal case, the tour guide awakens understanding in the tourist-host contact, an intercultural encounter will generally only be successful if both sides really desire this. The tourist will not be able to avoid leaving familiar tourist terrain and will have to be receptive to the new impressions afforded by the country and its people. Consequently it is exceedingly difficult to institutionalize such wishes as an independent programme point (Gluesing, 2003; Kienast, 2003; Reisinger & Turner, 2003).

If there is a professional group that is at least an incipient example of the transculturality postulated by Welsch (1999), it is that of tour guides, who, in both their work and their private life, live permanently with the contradictions between cultures and their respective flows. Tour guides, who according to their professional self-image operate in a cultural flow, can therefore be termed cosmopolitans in Hannerz' (1992) sense. Nonnenmann (2004: 293) also comes to this conclusion, when in the context of her study she explicitly refers to tour guides as "cosmopolitans of the 21st century." What is hidden behind this so urbane term? According to Vertovec and Cohen (2002), six different, partially overlapping conceptional approaches to cosmopolitanism can be distinguished:

*Table 2. Conceptional approaches to cosmopolitanism*

■	a sociocultural condition
■	a philosophical direction or world view
■	a political project with reference to the implementation of transnational institutions
■	a political project for recognizing the diversity of identities
■	an outlook or disposition
■	a practice or competence

*Source: Abridged from Vertovec and Cohen (2002)*

It is the last two approaches that primarily apply to tour guides. They are associated with the Swedish social anthropologist Hannerz (1992: 252f.), who characterizes the attributes of a cosmopolitan as follows:

There is, first of all, a willingness to engage with the Other, an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences. There can be no cosmopolitans without locals, representatives of more circumscribed territorial cultures. But apart from this appreciative orientation, cosmopolitanism tends also to be a matter of competence, of both a generalized and a more specialized kind. There is the aspect of a personal ability to make one's own way into other cultures, through listening, looking, intuiting, and reflecting, and there is cultural competence in the stricter sense of the term, a built-up skill in manoeuvring more or less expertly with a particular system of meanings. In its concern with the Other, cosmopolitanism thus becomes a matter of varieties and levels.

As they move back and forth between cultures, constantly trying to reconcile own and other, tour guides develop a special identity as classical wanderers between the worlds, repeatedly crossing the border between

their home country and foreign lands. This identity is characterized by Friedman (1994: 204) as “participating in many worlds, without becoming part of them.” For tour guides, who generally cover quite a diversified spectrum of destinations, this can lead to a situation in which their home country appears strange and foreign countries supposedly familiar (Nonnenmann, 2004). In any case most of the actors constantly have to change their perspective. Having guided the previous group through Myanmar, a guide may now be in Scotland, again waiting for the next job, which may lead to Peru – not to mention the few days in between spent back in his “actual” homeland, and be it only to attend to personal business. “If we live the cosmopolitan life,” Waldron (1992: 14) writes pertinently, “we draw our allegiances from here, there, and everywhere. Bits of cultures come into our lives from different sources, and there is no guarantee that they will fit together.”

As the foregoing remarks have shown, cosmopolitanism requires not only an appropriate outlook or disposition, but also a particular intercultural competence, which must be acquired in a never-ending process and calls for quite a bit of personal initiative. Only a person who has this key qualification can mediate, can become a mediator between divergent cultural systems. Ultimately, even for a cosmopolitan it can only be a matter of making his way into other cultures. And this, as Hannerz (1992: 253) graphically expounds, is overlaid by an apparently paradoxical dialectic between mastery and surrender,

Competence with regard to alien cultures for the cosmopolitan entails a sense of mastery. His understandings have expanded, a little more of the world is under control. Yet there is a curious, apparently paradoxical interplay between mastery and surrender here. It may be one kind of cosmopolitanism where the individual picks from other cultures only those pieces which suit him. In the long term, this is likely to be the way a cosmopolitan constructs his own unique personal perspective out of an idiosyncratic collection of experiences, although such selectivity can operate situatively in the short term as well. In another mode, however, the cosmopolitan does not make invidious distinctions among the particular elements of the alien culture in order to admit some of them into his repertoire and refuse others; he does not negotiate with the other culture but accepts it as a package deal. But even his surrender is a part of mastery. The cosmopolitan’s surrender to the alien culture implies personal autonomy vis-à-vis the culture where he originated. He has his obvious competence with regard to it, but he can choose to disengage from it. He possesses it, it does not possess him. Cosmopolitanism becomes proteanism.

I have pointed out the prominent role that tour guides play as a link between tour operators, incoming agencies and tourists and their

function as intercultural mediators. In the following I will illuminate their position from the perspectives of tour operators and of tourists who have participated in study trips. The following remarks are based primarily on empirical investigations carried out in the course of two dissertations.

## Tour guides in an intercultural context, as seen from the perspective of tour operators and tourists

The following chapter gives an insight view about the empirical work done by Scherle (2007) and Nonnenmann (2007). Whereas Scherle's study primarily focuses on the tour operator's perspectives on tour guides in an intercultural context, Nonnenmann's empirical work refers to the perspectives of tourists. Some brief annotations concerning research methods and context at the very beginning of the chapter enable a better contextualization of the empirical data.

### *Research methods and context*

Nonnenmann's (2004) dissertation deals primarily with the everyday life of tour guides and with their professional self-image in the contradictions between divergent cultures. In this context she carried out both standardized interviews and qualitative interviews of 243 study tour guides, 8 tour operators and 10 tourists from Germany. Scherle's (2006) dissertation examines intercultural business co-operations in the tourism sector. It investigates the role that tour operators and incoming agencies ascribe to tour guides in their bilateral co-operation. It also examines whether the companies have intercultural educational programmes for these key actors. The tour operators who took part in Scherle's study are from Germany, whereas the incoming agencies operate in Morocco. Most of the German tour operators as well as the Moroccan incoming agencies have a small- and medium-size background. In this context he interviewed 60 subjects – 30 from Germany and 30 from Morocco – using problem-centred interviews, which are especially well situated to sensitive and thorough analysis of culturally orientated research problems (Kopp 2003; Wiseman & Koester 1993). The quotes used in the following derive from the qualitative interviews and capture relevant perspectives on the part of representatives of tour operators and of tourists. The authors are aware that the different profiles of the subjects as well as the different nationality background of the incoming agencies and the tour operators have implications for the results; a

circumstance that is self-evident for every study being embedded into an intercultural context.

### *Tour operator's perspectives*

The series of interviewed representatives of tour operators will start with a niche market player who for years has championed greater professionalization in the training of tour guides:

The tour guides are (...) more important than anything else. I can have a tour with five poor hotels. If I have a good tour guide, who explains the necessity for the poor hotels, the trip will still be a success. On the other hand, if I have top hotels and a poor tour guide, the trip will be a flop in the minds of the customers. (...) We influence the choice of tour guides, precisely because this point is of crucial significance. (...) And I am astonished again and again, when I hear that tour operators in a good many countries are satisfied with 'today we have this tour guide, tomorrow this one comes and the next day that one.' Such things are not compatible with a study trip.

More than most of the other interviewees this manager has internalized the lesson that tour guides are ultimately the key figures when it comes to applying his business philosophy abroad:

The tour guide is the [author's note: stress on the word 'the'] representative. He represents us vis-à-vis the customers. The customers see in him the representative of our company, not Mr. so and so. The people come back and the first thing they say is 'the tour guide was good or bad!' If the tour guide was good, you can occasionally put over a programme point that at first appears difficult and that possibly only later – after it has been completed – is perceived as a small highlight. And if the tour guide is bad, the willingness of the people to participate in certain things drops.

This quotation underscores the function of tour guides as “visiting card” in the perception of the customers. Especially when there are complaints, customers often see their tour guides as their first contact person. This circumstance has gained in relevance in the past years, because their stronger customer orientation has led most tour operators to attempt to solve complaints en route. In this case – particularly in the case of financial claims – tour guides can function not only as mediators between customers and tour operators but also between tour operators and incoming agencies. When it comes to complaints, the perception of quality is strongly influenced by the cultural environment (Mang, 1998; Weiermair & Fuchs, 2000). A service that is considered satisfactory in our culture may be judged much better in another culture or vice versa.



Even if no customer complaints arise, operators depend on tour guides for continuous quality control on location.

Precisely in an intercultural context the tour guide, being a link between operators, incoming agencies and tourists, is a key to success in the tourism system that should by no means be underestimated. Ultimately a tour guide is not only the main contact person for the customer at a given destination, but he also explicitly functions – as Cohen puts it (1985) – as a pathfinder, who in the ideal case introduces the customers to the unfamiliar culture in a culturally sensitive manner. Thus the representative of a reputed German operator of study tours remarks:

As far as that goes, I consider a study tour guide to be extremely important. We hear that from the customer feedback, that they cannot get to know the country that the tour guide has shown them so intensively by themselves, because there are various things where they simply do not find access to the countries. I see the study tour guide as an intercultural mediator and as a key, in other words as a door opener in the key function of mediator. For that reason I believe that perhaps the term 'study trip' may die out one day, but certainly not the function of the tour guide.

The quotations so far make it clear that the tour operators definitely recognize the importance of tour guides in an intercultural context. Nevertheless merely 10.0% of the German tour operators interviewed by Scherle (2006) have intercultural training programmes for their tour guides. In many cases the companies assume – as the following quote makes clear – that tour guides will acquire the relevant intercultural competence on their own:

There is no explicit intercultural preparation. We expect, however, that a person who is employed as a tour guide will have educated himself in the intercultural sphere in such a manner that in the last analysis he knows both cultural spheres well and can make the appropriate connections.

A positive exception is a tour operator specialized in exclusive study trips who implemented intercultural training programmes as part of his official training for tour guides several years ago:

We carry out a two to three day tour guide training session annually at which special intercultural working groups are formed, i.e. there will be, e.g. an Islamic or a Buddhist working group.

These intercultural working groups provide not only an opportunity for employees working in certain destinations to exchange experiences.

Invited experts also pass on their individual competence. Ultimately, however, these measures are the exception.

### *Tourist's perspectives*

What view do tourists on study trips have of tour guides, assuming that the motivation of this clientele in particular is generally to get to know other cultures? The individuals interviewed by Nonnenmann (2004) were asked to cite examples of how their particular tour guide, acting as an intercultural mediator, tried to help them to appreciate the country and its people. The first citation refers to a woman who reported pertinent experiences from study trips to China and Turkey:

In China our tour guide not only explained the culture to us in a park, but also recited poems in the original and always made sure that we tried food and drinks that were typical of the landscape. The tour guide in Turkey led us into the old town in the evening and showed us how to enjoy ourselves 'properly' and he enabled us to go into all of the mosques.

The most impressive and lasting experiences for most of the interviewed tourists were ones in which they came into direct contact with the people of the host country and ones in which they were included in their everyday culture. It was considered particularly valuable if there was direct interaction in the tourist-host contact. As a rule these experiences did not occur as part of a planned programme point, but arose – as the following two quotes show – unexpectedly and spontaneously:

We had a very impressive experience in India. The tour guide stopped spontaneously in a village, chatted briefly with the people; then we were allowed to walk through the village together and even to visit two houses. Everything happened in a good, relaxed atmosphere and with much laughter, on the part of the Indians and on our part.

On a trip to Brazil the guide suddenly let us out at an agricultural fair. There were people bargaining, arguing, enjoying themselves, swearing. Towards evening there was music and dancing, to which other population groups besides traders and farmers came. Our guide continually drew our attention to little peculiarities in the guests' relations with each other that we wouldn't have noticed ourselves. Along with this, wonderful local cuisine and drinks, everything served and prepared for the normal inhabitants – just wonderful! Another example is Ireland. A visit to the dog races seems to be sufficient. There the most diverse forms of the Irish soul meet, either arguing hotly or, sunken in despair over a lost bet, slowly getting more and more drunk. The impressions could fill entire books.



These examples show how tour guides, acting as intercultural mediators, can stimulate cultural contacts. In the ideal case they act as “interpreters” in a twofold sense, firstly when there are language problems, and secondly as interpreters of foreign thinking and behaviour (Cohen, 1985). The next quote is a good example of a tour guide directing the interaction between tourists, local people and local guides:

On a trip through South Africa not only the local white tour guides, but also the coloured bus driver changed. Our tour guide tried to reduce the tension that even we could feel between the Afrikaner guides and the coloured bus drivers through objective lectures and subsequent discussions among all participants. For him it was a matter of course to eat his meals at the same table as the tour guides and bus drivers.

This example shows truly paradigmatically a tour guide responding sensitively to cultural differences to stimulate discussions and, what is more, make a constructive contribution to overcoming traditional stereotypes and prejudices. He is substantially involved in arranging and, in this case, in the positive learning effect of intercultural encounters. This circumstance is of crucial importance, because it is very rarely possible to approach an unfamiliar culture on the basis of abstract tolerance. Normally concrete assistance is required (Collier, 1989; Johnson, 2006; Storti, 2001). Who could do this better than tour guides, who more than most other occupational groups, embody a “crossover culture” and exemplify “cultural syncretism” (Canevacci, 1992; Nederveen Pieterse, 1998)?

### *Tour guides – cosmopolitans of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?*

During their many stays abroad tour guides have an opportunity granted to few occupational groups to look behind the facade of other countries. In the process they move back and forth – as is appropriate to leading actors – between the front and the back of the stage (Goffman, 1959), enjoy the insights behind the backdrops, they know the rules of the game and the correct conclusion: “The cosmopolitan may embrace the alien culture, but he does not become committed to it. All the time he knows where the exit is” (Hannerz, 1996: 103). It is ultimately this tightrope act that is the art of the profession, though it encompasses many other important facets, for instance the interpersonal therapeutic function as “reception point” or “lightning conductor.”

A person who interacts between cultures can mediate, can become a mediator between cultures. In the ideal case he can point out normality in things that appear alien. In the process tour guides can function as

the medium of cultural contact without being directly involved. Like a ferry that is boarded from two sides, both parties, tourists and hosts, can go on board and enter into interaction with each other. The ship as such provides the basis, but it is not directly involved in the (cultural) exchange. Tour guides can sensitize the tourists to cultural differences and thus counteract a possible culture shock (Ward et al., 2001), but they are and remain only the mediators and not the actors in this encounter.

As the contribution has shown, tour guides develop a special identity because they move back and forth between the cultures and are constantly involved in the reconciliation of own and other. The most appropriate term for this identity is the complex concept of cosmopolitanism. Their lifestyle may be unusual, at times unaccustomed, and many a spatially bound contemporary may even find it repugnant. Ultimately, the special capital of a tour guide who is employed worldwide is his extremely de-contextualized knowledge, which – in contrast to localized knowledge – is applicable independent of time and space (Löfgren, 1999). This is a capital with a global function that is beginning to show transcultural features. Because of it tour guides are quintessential cosmopolitans of the 21st century and appear excellently equipped for an increasingly flexible style of life and work. In dealing with native and foreign, own and other, they constantly change perspectives, oscillating back and forth across the border. Nevertheless, cultural divergences remain marked, which makes them negotiable, as Aderhold and Heideloff (2001) put it. Cosmopolitanism, however, requires not only an appropriate outlook or disposition, but also a certain intercultural competence, and acquiring this is a never ending process. Only he who possesses this key qualification can become a mediator between divergent cultural systems and bring about a culturally sensitive tourist-host contact that goes beyond abstract tolerance.

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# Service failure and service recovery on a package tour

## - Complainants' perceptions on tour leaders

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### Introduction

Service failure is inevitable. Service providers may strive towards a "zero defects" service but eventually failures happen because of the inherent heterogeneity in service provision and limitations in service providers' control over interactions with customers. As service failure cannot be eliminated, companies should understand the process of service recovery and have a service recovery strategy in order to establish procedures to handle failures and complaints effectively (Bowie & Buttle, 2004, 258; Schoefer & Ennew, 2005, 261).

When customers are dissatisfied they either voice or do not voice their dissatisfaction. They can complain to the company, to third-parties, typically consumer affairs bodies or legal entities, or just spread negative word-of-mouth to their friends and relatives. Complaints to the company can be made concurrently or subsequently. In the first case a customer complains at the same time as the service failure occurs and by doing this gives the company's employees the opportunity to respond and attempt to rectify the problem. Customers who complain subsequently can telephone, email or write letters of complaint to the service provider and with the passage of time they came to feel more strongly about the service failure. However the company still has the opportunity to retrieve the situation and win back the customer (Bowie & Buttle, 2004, 257-258).

The field of customer complaint behavior has been relatively well researched but the implications of customer complaint behavior for organizations have been examined far less often even though the manner



of an organization's response to a complaint can have a major impact on customer's post complaint consumer behavior (Davidow, 2003a, 225).

According to McCole (2004, 347) there are two important theoretical paradigms prevalent in service recovery research. The first is disconfirmation theory and it takes into account the difference between expectations and perceptions. The second is equity theory and points to individuals' perceptions of the fairness of a situation or a decision. The equity theory is used in this study.

This study examines dissatisfied customers' opinions on tour leaders' actions in service failure and service recovery situations. The purpose of this study is to explore the components of a package tour that lead to customer complaints and describe the complainants perceived justice dimensions related to service recovery efforts of the tour leaders. Two research themes and six research questions are identified. The first theme is related to the satisfaction with the vacation and the causes of the complaints. The research questions are:

- How satisfied the complainants were with the vacation?
- What were the causes of the complaints?
- How the service failures related to the tour leaders affected the satisfaction with the vacation?

The second theme is the perceived fairness of the tour leaders' actions in service recovery situations. According to the equity theory the perceived fairness was divided to distributive, procedural and interactional justice. The research questions are:

- How satisfied the complainants were with the tour leaders actions in service recovery?
- How did the complainants perceive the facilitation and the promptness of the tour leaders (procedural justice)?
- How did the complainants perceive the apology, the explanation, the attentiveness and the effort of the tour leaders (interactional justice)?

The respondents of this study have all complained to the company subsequently and the majority also concurrently when the service failure occurred. The survey data was collected with an online questionnaire from the customers of Finnish tour operator Suntours who made a written complaint to the company in winter season 06/07. The survey consisted of questions related to perceptions of the tour leader service and the actions of the customer service department of the company. However, this study concentrates on complaints made to tour leaders concurrently at the vacation destination and therefore the performance of the customer service department is not examined.

This paper first outlines the theoretical framework of the study. Service failure and recovery is discussed briefly after which the organizational response to customer complaints is examined in more detail. Then the role of the tour operator and especially the role of the tour leaders are discussed. This is followed by the presentation of the research data and the results of the study. Finally the conclusions and managerial implications are suggested.

## Theoretical framework of the study

### *Service failure and service recovery*

Service failure occurs when the service provided does not match the customer's expectation of the service promised in the pre-encounter marketing mix (Bowie & Buttle, 2004, 255). The service provider's reaction can potentially either reinforce a strong customer bond, or change a seemingly minor distraction into a major incident (Hoffman, Kelley, & Rotalsky, 1995, 49).

Bitner, Booms, & Tetreault, (1990, 74-80) identified three categories of service failures, which were employee response to service delivery system failure (unavailable, slow or other core service failure), employee response to customer needs and requests (employees are unable to meet the customer's individual needs and preferences) and unprompted and unsolicited employee actions (unacceptable behavior of employees). The study of Bitner et al. (1990) focused on airlines, hotels, and restaurants but all these causes could be also related to tour leader services. However, in this study the specific causes of tour leaders' service failures is not examined as the focus is on service failures' effects on vacation satisfaction and in service recovery actions of the tour leaders.

Service recovery refers to the actions an organization takes in response to a service failure (Grönroos, 1990). As service failures inevitably occur, all organizations should have a service recovery strategy. According to Bowie and Buttle (2004, 258-260) service recovery strategies include the following. In the zero defects strategy or do it right first time strategy the main principle is to design out every potential problem before it can occur and thus reduce the incidence of customer complaints. Another strategy is to encourage complaints and improve service quality with customer comments and feedback. An organization can also work to treat customers as fairly as possible or learn from customer complaints by analysis of their patterns. The recovery paradox demonstrates that an effective strategy can redeem a potentially disastrous situation and turn

customers with complaints into loyal customers. Last, an organization should be aware that there are also professional complainers who like to complain in the hope of obtaining compensation.

### *Organizational responses to customer complaints*

Davidow (2003a) summarizes more than 50 studies of organizational responses to customer complaints from the past 20 years on the basis of which he proposes an expanded model of post complaint customer behavior responses (Fig. 1).

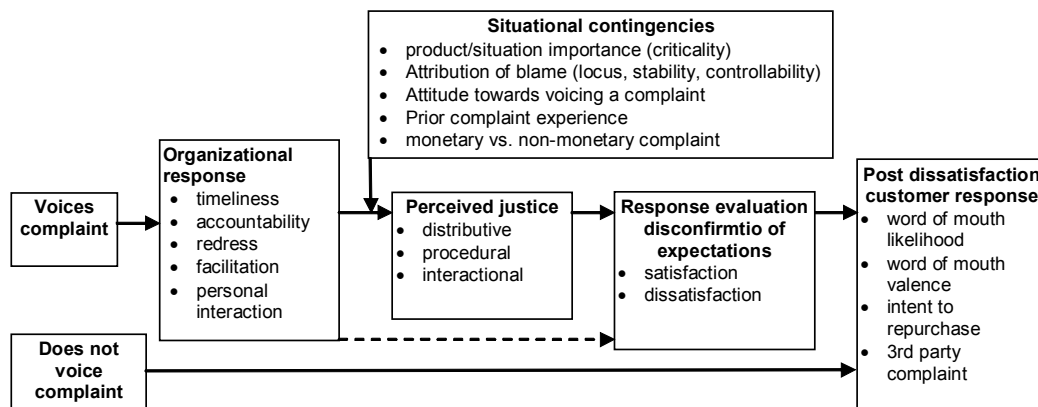


Figure 1. Post complaint customer behavior responses model (Davidow, 2003a, 247)

The model recognizes the key roles of three main areas. First, perceived justice is a possible mediating influence between the organizational response and post complaint customer behavior. Perceived justice is the customer's reaction to the organizational complaint response and it is considered to be an antecedent to complaint-handling satisfaction, leading to repurchase intentions and word-of-mouth activity. Perceived justice can be divided to distributive, procedural and interactional justice. Distributive justice is related to the fairness of the decision outcome, procedural justice to fairness of the decision-making process and interactional justice to the fairness of interpersonal behavior in complaint-handling (Davidow, 2003a, 246-247).

The second area that has been introduced into the model focuses on the situational contingencies associated with complaint management, for example the importance of the product or the situation, attribution of blame and attitude towards voicing a complaint. The research should include looking at the model with and without these confounding variables (Davidow, 2003a, 247).

The third area is the addition of the effect of those who do not complain on post dissatisfaction customer behavior. Quantification of market losses from dissatisfied but non-complaining customers would enable the measurement of the effectiveness of complaint management (Davidow, 2003a, 248).

Also Karatepe (2006) has developed and tested a model of the effects of organizational responses (atonement, facilitation, promptness, apology, explanation, attentiveness and effort) to perceived justice (distributive, procedural and interactional) leading to satisfaction and loyalty (Fig. 2).

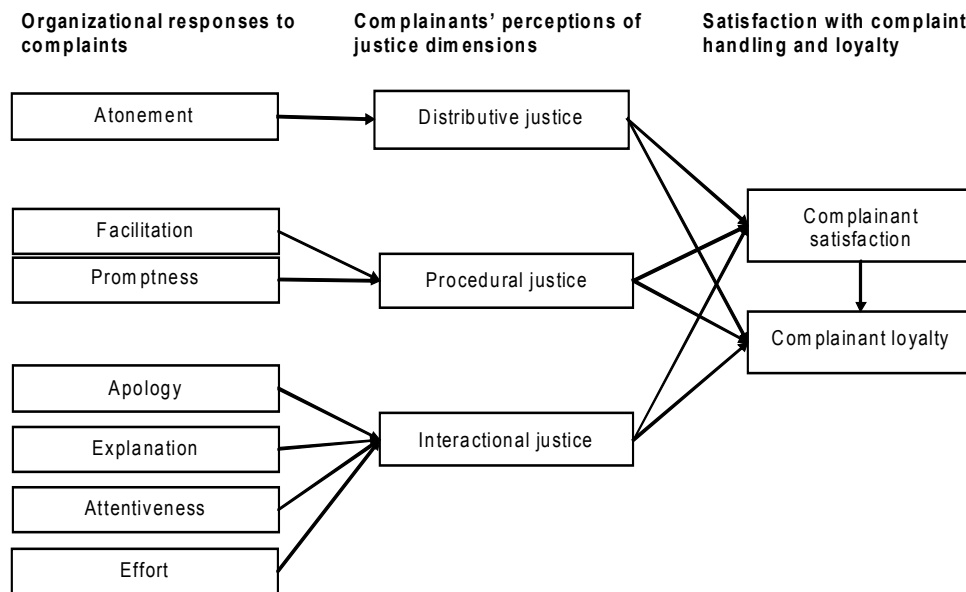


Figure 2. The effects of organizational responses to perceive justice, satisfaction and loyalty (Karatepe 2006, 72)

According to Karatepe (2006, 85-85) the organizational responses to complaints affect the underlying justice dimensions. The study indicated that atonement is a necessary condition for distributive justice and therefore some form of atonement is expected by the complainants. Promptness seemed to have a stronger effect on procedural justice than facilitation while attentiveness and effort had stronger effects on interactional justice than apology and explanation. The study also reported that the effect of interactional justice on complaint satisfaction and loyalty is stronger than effects of distributive justice and procedural justice. The interpersonal skills of the organization’s frontline employees appeared to have a key role on complainants’ perceptions on justice, satisfaction and loyalty.

Karatepe (2006, 86-87) emphasizes that the complaint should

be processed quickly. The interpersonal skills of the organization's frontline employee play a critical role and partial atonement is a remedy for satisfaction and loyalty, if complainants receive fair interpersonal treatment. Also ongoing training programs are considered crucial as employees should learn how to provide quick responses to complaints, be attentive and display positive energy to resolve the situation. With empowerment frontline employees have the responsibility and authority to resolve the problems at first hand.

### *Tour leaders on a package tour*

Outbound travel can be essentially classified into two types: the group package tour (GPT) and the foreign independent tour (FIT) (Wang, Hsieh, & Huan, 2000, 177). In Europe the most common way of distributing foreign holiday travel has been through inclusive tours packaged and marketed by tour operators. Tour operating is a process of combining aircraft seats and beds in hotels, in a manner that will make the purchase price attractive to potential holidaymakers. Tour wholesalers achieve this through bulk buying, which generates economies of scale that can be passed on to the customer (Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert, Shepherd, & Wanhill, 1998, 256).

The European Union package travel directive defines a package as a pre-arranged combination of at least two of the following: transport, accommodation and other significant tourist services. The package has to be sold at an inclusive price and has to cover a period of more than 24 hours or include overnight accommodation. (Council Directive 90/314/EEC)

According to Enoch (1996, 199) all package tours are characterized by four features. A package tour is a rational and effective way to safely visit faraway destinations. Second, it is also usually less expensive than an individual trip to the same destination because tour operators buy in bulk and can therefore negotiate lower accommodation and transportation prices. Third, a package tour is designed by the tour operator and the tourists have no say in the composition of the contents of the package. Fourth, the package tour is not flexible. The tour has to progress exactly according to the specified plan and it is the contractual duty of the tour operator to make sure that the tourist receives everything exactly as promised in the description of the tour.

A package tour can be further divided to different sectors. For example Wang et al. (2000) use the term group package tour which consists of various services: pre-tour briefing, airport/plane, hotel, restaurants, coach, scenic-spots, shopping opportunities, optional tours and other services. On the other hand Bowie and Chang (2005) discuss

guided package tours that include the services of tour leader, hotels, restaurants, coach, shopping opportunities, optional tours, attractions and other services. The group package tour is less controlled than the guided package tour in which the tour leader's role is more significant as the same group of tourists travel together for example on a coach tour. In this study the package tour refers more to the group package tour because even though the tourists buy the package of services they are free to decide which services they wish to use.

The tour leader (representative, rep) is the public face of the tour operator and therefore vitally important. Their function is to ensure that the customer's vacation runs smoothly and to sort out any problems that might arise (Yale, 1995, 160).

Larsson Mossberg (1995, 444) has studied the tour leader's importance in charter tours and states that the tour leader is important to the tourist's perception of the whole tour and that different performances, duties and situational variables affected the tourist's perceptions.

Tour leaders' work consists of many different tasks. At the beginning of the vacation they will meet the customers at the airport and direct them onto the transfer coach, give an introductory talk about the hotels and the destination, see that the customers are taken care of at hotel reception and organize a welcome party. They also prepare a file of local information, sell excursions and are on call 24 hours a day in case of an emergency. At the end of the vacation the tour leaders go through the arrival procedure in reverse; travelling with the transfer coach from hotels to the airport and ensure that the check in is done without problems (Yale, 1995, 160-161). It is important to note that the tour leaders of Suntours do not only sell excursions but also act as tour guides during the excursions.

The tour leader can be the crucial competitive advantage for the tour operator. The tour leader's performance within the service encounter has an effect on company image, customer loyalty and worth-of-mouth communication. It may also be the factor that differentiates the product from the competitors' product (Larsson Mossberg, 1995, 437). Also according to Hanefors and Larsson Mossberg (1999, 1999) a tour operator that provides good service through caring personnel who in turn make the tourists feel safe is much more likely to have loyal customers.

Tour leaders are especially crucial when things go wrong, such as when someone loses a passport or is robbed. They will also have to sort out problems arising from faults by the company, the airlines, and the ground handling agents or the hoteliers. In fact the tour leaders are the first port of call for most client complaints, particularly those that are likely to lead to continued dispute. Ideally, the tour leader will sort out



the problem on the spot, or at least prevent it from getting worse, so that if compensation does have to be paid, it can be kept to a minimum and the company will attract as little bad publicity as possible (Yale, 1995, 161).

## Research data

The sample for this survey was the customers of Suntours who filed a written complaint to the company in winter season 06/07. The survey was carried out in November 2007 so the service failure had occurred from six to twelve months earlier depending on the respondent. In winter season 06/07 Suntours received a total of 1021 customer complaints, 486 of which included an email address of the respondent. An online survey was sent to all these addresses and 456 complainers were reached as 30 email addresses were not in use any more.

The strengths of the online survey data collection were the possibility to collect a large amount of data in a relatively short amount of time, and the elimination of the necessity for researchers to enter or process the data. There were also some problems regarding the online survey. Only those complainers who had reported their email address were selected to the study. This must be kept in mind when the results of the analyses are evaluated. Also some technical problems occurred in data collection. Unfortunately the server of the online survey service provider was overloaded the day the survey was launched which caused slowness and even total inoperativeness. Due to other technical reasons some respondents were unable to use the survey.

The survey design was based on various studies related to service failure, service recovery and customer complaints (Blodgett, Granbois, & Walters, 1993; Blodgett, Hill, & Tax, 1997; Bolting, 1989; Davidow, 2003b; Karatepe, 2006; Smith, Bolton, & Wagner, 1999). The survey consisted of questions related to the satisfaction with the vacation, reasons for the service failure, and opinions on the service recovery efforts of the employees both in the vacation destination and afterwards in the customer service department of the company, post complaint consumer behavior and attitudes towards the company. Demographic information was also included. The demographic profile of the respondents is summarized in Table 1.

The online questionnaire included mainly multiple-choice and some open-ended questions. Most of the questions were answered by using a 5-point Likert scale. It took about 10 minutes to fill in the questionnaire and only one respondent commented that the questionnaire had too many questions.

In total 304 respondents filled in the questionnaire. As 30 email addresses were not in use the final response rate was 67 %. The response rate was increased by sending a reminder email and offering a gift certificate of Suntours worth of 200 € to one randomly selected respondent. The high response rate also indicates that the complainers were willing to share their opinions about the service failure and the recovery efforts of the company.

*Table 1. The demographic profile of the respondent*

1. Sex		4. Occupation	
Males	38%	Entrepreneur/farmer	10%
Females	62%	Manager	10%
		Official	49%
2. Age		Worker	18%
under 25 yrs.	2%	Retired	9%
25-34 yrs.	13%	Student	2%
35-44 yrs.	28%	Other	2%
45-54 yrs.	28%	5. Household income	
55-64 yrs.	25%	under 13 000 €	1%
Over 65 yrs.	4%	13 000-23 999 €	6%
3. Education		24 000-36 999 €	17%
Comprehensive school	10%	37 000-55 999 €	24%
Secondary school	8%	over 56 000 €	47%
Vocational school	12%	6. Prior complaint experience	
College	29%	Yes	60%
University of applied sciences	14%	No	40%
University	27%		

## Research results

### *Satisfaction with the vacation and the causes of the complaints*

The first research question was how satisfied the complainants were with the vacation. In the survey the respondents were asked to define their total satisfaction with the vacation by answering the question “How was your vacation as a whole?” with a 5-point Likert scale. (1=bad, 2=sufficient, 3=moderate, 4=good, 5=extremely good).

It seems that despite the service failure the vacation was considered quite satisfactory. In total 62% of respondents felt that the vacation was good (51%) or extremely good (11%), 27% moderate, 7% sufficient and only 3% thought that the vacation went badly. There are no significant



differences in total satisfaction between males and females or different age groups. However statistically significant relationship ( $p=0.029$ ) is found when household income and total satisfaction are cross tabulated. The respondents whose household income was less than 56 000 € seemed to be more satisfied with their vacation than respondents whose household income exceeded 56 000 €.

The second research question was related to the causes of the complaints which were examined in two ways. First the complaints were classified according to the main cause of service failure by the employee of Suntours. In this classification each complaint had only one main cause or if the main cause could not be defined a class of “many causes” was used. In the survey the respondents were asked “What was the service failure related to?” and they could choose one or many options or define the cause by themselves if it was not mentioned in the list. The causes of the complaints are summarized in Table 2. In the primary cause of complaint the figures are percentages of complaints and in the case of all causes the figures are percentages of respondents as many causes could be chosen.

*Table 2. The causes of the complaints*

	Main cause of complaint (percentage of complaints)	The service failure was related to (percentage of respondents)
Accommodation	64%	69%
Flight	9%	13%
Destination services	9%	14%
Tour leader services	3%	19%
Car rental service	1%	2%
Sales and marketing	1%	7%
Other	7%	15%
Many causes	6%	

When primary causes are examined 64% of complaints were caused by the accommodation services and 9% by flight services. Destination services also accounted for 9% of complaints and tour leader services were the main cause of 3% of complaints. Car rentals and sales and marketing both accounted for 1% of complaints and other reasons 7%. In 6% of complaints the main cause could not be defined as there were many equal causes.

Almost 70% of the respondents considered accommodation services as a cause of complaint so it is clear that accommodation is by far the most common cause of complaint in both classifications. 13% of the respondents were not satisfied with the flight services and 14% had

complained about destination services. What is interesting is that even though the tour leader services are the main cause of only 3% of the complaints, almost 20% of respondents were not satisfied with the tour leaders and considered them as a cause of the service failure. Also sales and marketing seems to be causing dissatisfaction even though it might not be the primary reason for dissatisfaction and complaints.

The third research question was how the service failures related to the tour leaders affected the satisfaction with the vacation. This was examined by comparing the perceived satisfaction of those who stated that the failure was related to tour leaders and those who stated it was not. A statistically significant ( $p=0.006$ ) crosstab indicates that there is a relationship between the two variables. It seems that the respondents who stated the tour leaders as a cause of service failure were less satisfied with the vacation. More than 20% of those whose service failure was at least partly caused by the tour leader felt that the vacation was bad or sufficient and about 44% good or extremely good. Instead only 8% of those whose service failure was not related to the tour leaders thought that the vacation went badly or sufficiently and 67% well or very well.

#### *Perceived justice related to tour leader service in service recovery situations*

Distributive justice perceptions involve the allocation of compensation by the organization in response to the inequity caused by a service failure (Smith et al., 1999, 359). The respondents of the survey had all complained to the company subsequently, after the vacation and 77% also concurrently to the tour leaders in the vacation destination. Some of them might have been given compensation already in the destination by the tour leaders, but mainly the compensation has been done afterwards. Therefore it is not possible to examine the distributive justice of the service recovery related to the tour leaders. However, the respondents were asked whether they were content with the tour leader's actions in solving their problem. This answers the fourth research question "How satisfied the complainants were with the tour leader's actions in service recovery?" The respondents were also asked whether they thought that the problem should have been solved already in the vacation destination (Fig. 3).

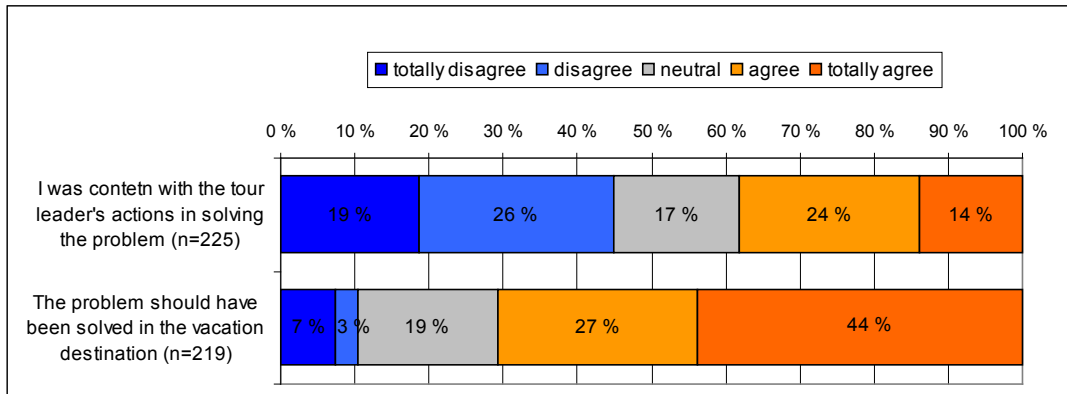


Figure 3: Satisfaction with the tour leaders actions in service recovery

In total 38% of the respondents were content with the tour leader's actions in a service recovery situation, but 45% were not satisfied with the tour leader's performance. A statistically significant ( $p=0.006$ ) crosstab indicated that there was a relationship between the satisfaction and the sex of the respondent. Females seemed to be more content with the tour leader's performance than males. Significant relationships between satisfaction and age or satisfaction and household income could not be found.

For example Karatepe (2006) emphasizes the importance of the empowerment of frontline employees and their authority to solve the problems at first hand. This study also shows that the complainants feel that the tour leaders do not have the authority to solve the problems in the destination. More than 70% of the respondents who complained concurrently felt that the problem should have been solved already in the destination.

According to Karatepe (2006, 84-85) facilitation and promptness have a significant positive relationship to complainants' perceptions of procedural justice. In this study the fifth research question was therefore "How did the complainants perceive the facilitation and the promptness of the tour leaders?" The respondents gave their opinion to three statements related to the procedural justice of the tour leaders (Fig. 4):

- The tour leader encouraged customers to inform about the perceived defects.
- It was easy to inform the tour leader about the defects.
- The tour leader solved the problem fast enough.

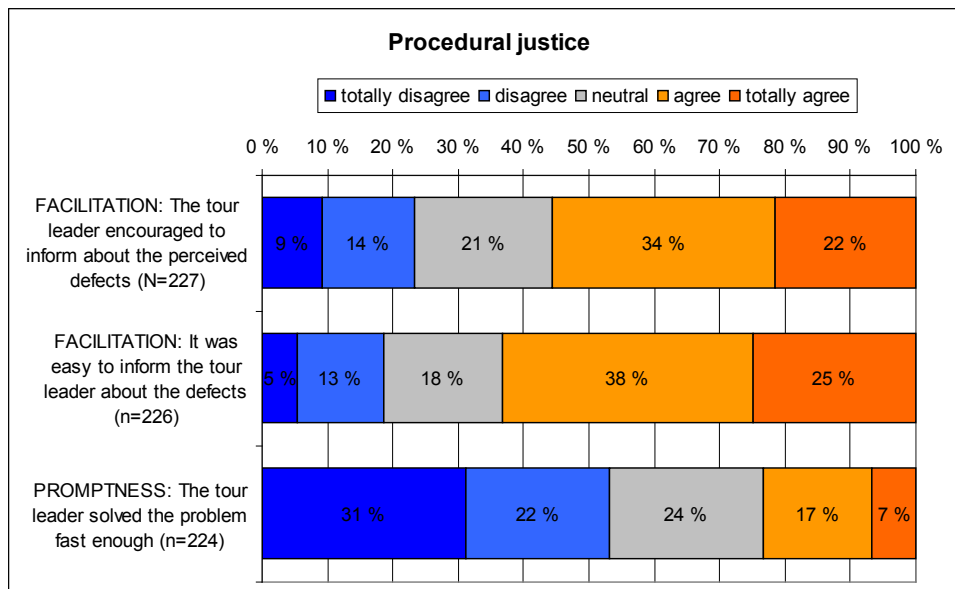


Figure 4. Perceived procedural justice

The facilitation was examined in relation to statements. Over 55% of the respondents felt that the tour leader encouraged them to inform the tour leaders about perceived service failures. However 23% felt they were not encouraged to express their dissatisfaction. More than 60% of the respondents thought that the tour leaders were approachable and it was easy to tell them about the defects. However, more than half of the respondents felt that the tour leaders did not solve the problems fast enough.

Apology, explanation, attentiveness and effort exert significant effects on complainants’ perceptions of interactional justice (Karatepe 2006, 85). The last research question “How did the complainants perceive the apology, the explanation, the attentiveness and the effort of the tour leaders?” was examined by the following statements (Fig. 5):

- The tour leader sincerely apologized for the service failure
- The tour leader gave me an explanation of the reasons for the service failure
- The tour leader was polite
- The tour leader did everything possible to solve the problem

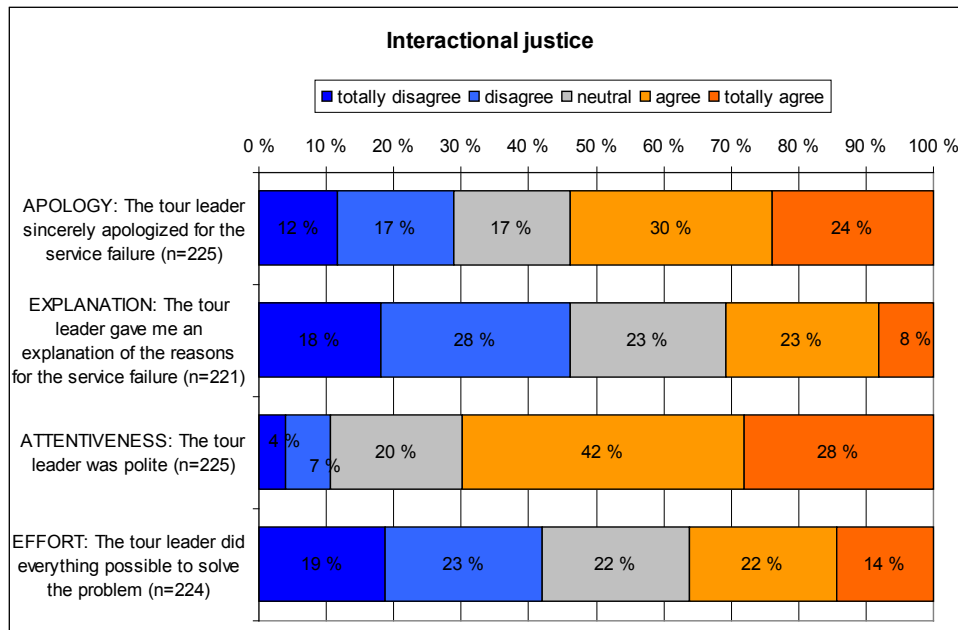


Figure 5. Perceived interactional justice

More than half of the respondents felt that the tour leader sincerely apologized for the service failure and about 30% felt that they did not receive a sincere apology. Nearly 50% stated that the tour leader did not explain the reasons for the service failure properly and about 30% of the respondents were given an explanation. The tour leaders were considered polite (70%) in service recovery situations whereas only about 10% of the respondents thought that the tour leaders were not polite. 36% of the respondents felt that the tour leader did everything he or she could to solve the problem but 42% thought that the tour leader could have done more.

## Conclusions and discussion

The purpose of the study was to examine dissatisfied customers' opinions on tour leaders' actions in service failure and service recovery situations. An online survey was sent to those customers of Suntours who complained to Suntours in winter season 06/07 and whose email address was available (486 complainants). In total 304 responses were received and the response rate was 67%.

The first research theme was related to the satisfaction with the vacation and the causes of the complaints. The research questions were how satisfied the complainants were with the vacation, what were the causes of the complaints and how did the service failures related to the tour leaders affect the satisfaction with the vacation. Despite the perceived

defects and problems the respondents were relatively satisfied with the vacation as more than 60% stated that the vacation went well or extremely well and less than 30% adequately or badly. The causes of the complaints were examined in two ways. The complaints were classified according to the primary cause of complaint and in the survey the respondents could define the causes of their complaints. Despite the differences in measuring methods, the major cause of complaints was accommodation as nearly 70% of complaints were related to accommodation services. Interestingly the tour leader services were the primary reason for only 3% of complaints but nearly every fifth respondent was dissatisfied with the tour leaders and defined the tour leader services as a cause of complaint. The respondents who stated the tour leaders as a cause of service failure were less satisfied with the vacation than those whose complaint was not related to tour leaders.

The second theme was the perceived fairness of the tour leaders' actions in service recovery situations and the research questions were how satisfied the complainants were with the tour leaders actions in service recovery, how did the complainants perceive the facilitation and the promptness of the tour leaders and how did the complainants perceive the apology, the explanation, the attentiveness and the effort of the tour leaders. According to this study about almost 40% of the respondents were content but 45% were not content with tour leader's actions in service recovery situations. It seems that the tour leaders are polite and approachable, but their ability to correct the service failure and solve problems is considered limited and time consuming. The tour leaders seem to understand the importance of an apology but a proper explanation of the reasons behind the service failure is not given often enough. However, the actions of tour leaders were considered important as more than 70% of those who complained concurrently in the vacation destination thought that the problem should have been solved during the vacation.

The survey data is only partly used in this study and therefore there are various future research directions. With more sophisticated analyses (for example regression analysis and structural equation modeling) many research topics can be approached. Possible research topics are for example the situational contingencies related to perceived justice and the post dissatisfaction customer behavior. It is also possible to connect the service recovery efforts of the front-line employees in the destination and the employees of the customer service department and examine how these affect the perceived justice, satisfaction and post complaint behavior, for example word of mouth communication, loyalty and intent to repurchase.

## Managerial implications

This study offers some important managerial implications for the development of the service recovery process and strategies. Suntours received a total of 1021 complaints in the winter season 06/07 and it seems that the amount is growing every season. The tour operators should therefore prepare themselves for the growth of the amount of complaints and make the service recovery process more efficient by cutting the amount of complaints, increasing the training and empowerment of the tour leaders and learning from the complaints.

The results of this study emphasize the significance of the accommodation services, which is clearly the most important cause of complaints. Therefore it is essential that the tour operators ensure that the accommodation services correspond to the expectations of the customers. More attention has to be paid to the descriptions of the brochure and information given on the Internet. The tour leaders should also be more aware of the quality of the accommodation services and check that the required quality levels are attained.

The amount of customer complaints could also be reduced by paying more attention to the actions of tour leaders. This study revealed that every fifth complainer related the service failure at least partly to tour leaders. Additionally solving the problem was considered time consuming. One possible solution to these could be training and empowerment of the tour leaders. With proper training the tour leaders could get accustomed to facing dissatisfied customers while with empowerment time could be saved if the tour leaders were authorized to take actions immediately when a service failure occurs and make service recovery decisions by themselves. The role of the destination manager could also be more significant at least when severe service failures occur and certain authority is required. Empowerment of the employees of the destination would increase the amount of service failures solved during the vacation and reduce the amount of written complaints.

Additionally all complaints should be analysed carefully in order to detect the weak points of the services and improve the quality of the package tour. The customer complaints are an important source of information related to service failures and customer preferences.



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## Tour leaders in customer complaints

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### Introduction

Finnish residents made 3,2 million leisure trips abroad with at least one overnight stay in the destination country in 2007 (Statistics Finland, 2008). According to data from the Association of Finnish Travel Agents (AFTA, 2009), in 2008 nearly a million Finnish tourists travelled abroad on a package tour. 70% of the destinations were in Europe while the most popular long-distance destination was Thailand, with 93 000 tourists, and a 12% growth from the previous year. These figures show that Finns are eager travelers, as Finland has a population of just over 5 million. It is also clear that in Finland, a package tour is a common way to travel abroad for a vacation. According to Selänniemi (1996, 225-226) Finnish package tourists come from all social classes and it is not possible to distinguish a certain type of tourists who use package tours.

The European Union's Council Directive on package travel defines a package as a pre-arranged combination of at least two of the following: accommodation, transport and ancillary services. Furthermore these must be offered or sold to the customer at an inclusive price. (Council Directive 90/314/EEC.) This study is based on package tours, which include accommodation, flight and tour leaders' services at the destination.

In Scandinavia, the competition on the charter-tour market is fierce and tour operators offer very similar products. The different tour operators' customers may even end up travelling on the same flight and staying at the same hotel. Hence, the crucial competitive advantages for the tour operator can be the tour leader. The tour leader's performance within the service encounter has an effect on company image, customer

loyalty and worth-of-mouth communication. It may also be the factor that differentiates the product from the competitors' products (Larsson Mossberg, 1995, 437).

This requires an understanding of what happens during the service encounter between the tourist and the tour leader. Within the package tour context, service satisfaction or dissatisfaction can be evaluated for specific service encounters, or for the whole tour. In this study service encounter satisfaction is used. It reflects the customer's feelings about discrete encounters with the personnel, and is a result of the customers' evaluation of the events that occur during a definable period of time, such as a package tour (Hanefors & Larsson Mossberg, 1999, 188).

Customer complaints enable researchers to study how interactions with the customer are handled by the service provider. Single customer complaints offer detailed accounts of the sources of customer dissatisfaction, as well as give indications about the actions the customer is considering taking to express this dissatisfaction (Edvardsson & Roos, 2001, 271-273).

The purpose of this study is to examine dissatisfaction and tour leaders in customer complaints. First the sources of dissatisfaction on a package tour are briefly presented. The main focus of the study will be on answering the research question of what the sources of dissatisfaction are in relation to the tour leaders. The article begins by a discussion on dissatisfaction and customer complaints and how these are related. This is followed by a presentation of the theoretical framework upon which the study is based. The fourth section is concerned with the data and the methodology used, after which the findings of the study are presented. In the concluding section some managerial implications of the findings are discussed.

The data of this study consists of 84 customer complaints filed to Suntours by customers of one destination in Thailand during the winter period of 2006-2007. In these complaints, 56 critical incidents related to tour leaders were identified and analysed. Tour leaders were defined as the employed tour leaders of Suntours at the destination. Suntours was chosen because it is the largest Finnish tour operator.

## Package tours and customer dissatisfaction

### *The package tour product*

A tourist product can be described as a service package, which consists of different molecules (see Shostack, 1977) or modules, as they are often

called. The core of the product is formed by the service concept, i.e. a description of customer value. Various activity modules, for instance accommodation and transportation, form the service process. The service process is a chain of services produced by one or several companies (Komppula & Boxberg, 2005, 24-25.) In the light of this, the package tour product (Figure 1) can be argued to consist of at least the following service modules: destination services, flight services, environment, accommodation services, pre-tour services and airport services. The outer circle of the figure describes the elements and actors involved in providing and affecting the realisation of the core value through the service modules. This constitutes the service delivery system, in this case the system built by the tour operator to deliver the service to the tourist. Also other service modules might naturally influence the package tour product. For example restaurants and shopping facilities at the destination are considered as part of the package tour in some studies (Wang, Hsieh & Huan 2000; Bowie & Chang 2005).

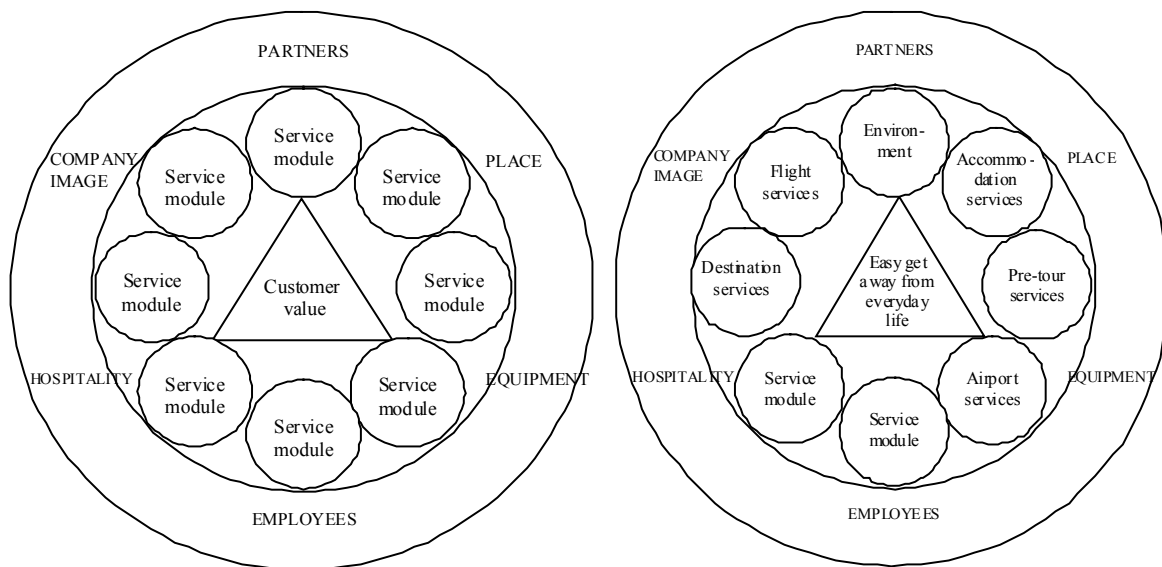


Figure 1. Package tour product (modified from Komppula & Boxberg, 2005)

The customer value of the package tour can be defined as the “easy get away from everyday life”, as the tour operator has constructed the product on behalf of the tourist. The customer experiences the product within the service environment and the framework of the service provider and filters the experiences through expectations and previous mental images of the company and corresponding products (Komppula & Boxberg, 2005, 24-25).

The package tour product is constructed by the tour operator, but the separate modules can be produced by various companies chosen by the tour operator. Ideally, each module and process in the service delivery system should bring added value to either the service or the experience. Tourists feel they are getting added value by not having to pay attention to details, allowing them to instead focus on enjoying their holiday. (Komppula & Boxberg, 2005.) However, if some part of the package tour product does not provide the promised and expected service satisfactorily, it may decrease the overall value of the experience and even lead to dissatisfaction (Neal & Gursoy, 2008, 59-60).

Bowie and Chang (2005, 304) further define a package tour as a very labour intensive and synthetic multitude of components. It contains all the special “soft” characteristics of services such as seasonality, perishability, inseparability, intangibility and simultaneous production and consumption, while also containing tangible “hard” elements such as hotel rooms and airplane fares.

### *Tour leaders as mediators*

Tour leaders' at the destination have many tasks. The main job of the tour leader is to act as a mediator between the tourist and the destination. Mediating is defined as any active attempt by an individual to arbitrate the tourist experience of another individual. A mediator, also called a broker, is someone who assists in sense-making and in the tourist's (re) constructions of his or her experience as well as the (re)presentation of that experience (Jennings & Weiler, 2006, 58). The mediating starts at the airport, where the tour leaders meet the arriving tourists. In the transfer coach the tourists are given a first introduction to the destination. At arrival to the hotel, the tour leader is present at the reception to make sure the tourists are cared for. The tour leaders also provide additional information about the destination at a welcome reception at the hotel and in a file located in the hotel lobby. To further mediate the tourists' experience, the tour leaders are constantly on call in case of emergencies. When it is time for the tourists to leave the destination, the tour leaders are present in the transfer coach and make sure the airport formalities run smoothly (Yale, 1995, 160-161).

The tour leaders are the tour operators' public face at the destination (Yale, 1995, 160). Tour leaders face tension in cases of service failures. This tension results from different demands on their actions from the tourists and the tour operators. The tour leaders must provide emotional support to the tourists in difficult circumstances, while also trying to influence their perceptions of the tour operator in order to protect the company (Guerrier & Adib, 2000, 350).

### *Satisfaction and dissatisfaction*

The relationship between satisfaction and dissatisfaction is complex. Customers might view the overall tourism experience as satisfactory although they file a complaint about some certain aspect of it. Likewise, even if no part of the service delivery system has failed the customer might still be dissatisfied with the experience (Johnston, 1995, 64-65). Satisfaction and dissatisfaction are not necessarily mirror images of behaviour, although the underlying reasons are often the same. An event which, if handled poorly, causes great numbers of dissatisfied responses does not necessarily create the same amount of satisfied reactions when executed well (Bitner, Blooms, Tetreault, 1990, 81). For example, getting ones luggage at the airport quickly does not lead to satisfaction, but having to wait for it leads to dissatisfaction (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2001, 84).

Customer satisfaction is not the only criteria in deciding future purchases. Trust towards the service provider and previous experiences also affect the decision (Liljander & Roos, 2001, 16). A long service relationship with the service provider may either decrease the effects of a service failure, or even make matters worse if the customer feels cheated and let down by the service provider. Customers who are dissatisfied or feel let down by the service provider are more likely to switch to another service provider, spread negative information and seek compensation through third parties (Bolting, 1989, 5).

### *Customer complaints as measures of dissatisfaction*

Customer complaints are only one of several ways for customers to express dissatisfaction. Other modes are badmouthing the service provider to others, boycotting the service provider, switching service providers, and seeking compensation through a third party (Singh, 1990, 78). It is clear that not all dissatisfied customers file an official customer complaint to the service provider. Hence, the amount of customer complaints a company receives cannot be taken to directly correspond with the absolute number of dissatisfied customers (Bolting, 1989, 5).

The reasons for not filing an official customer complaint with the service provider might be that the customer feels it requires too much effort or he/she feels that the possible compensation might not be worth the effort. Also the customer's personality type plays a role in deciding the channel for venting their dissatisfaction. Angry customers are most likely to file complaints with the service provider, while timid customers are more likely to use one or more of the other channels of expressing dissatisfaction (Chebat, Davidow, & Codjovi, 2005, 340).

According to the Finnish general terms for package tours §14.4., the tourist may not allege a breach of contract unless he informs the tour

operator of the breach within a reasonable time. Furthermore, a breach which can be rectified at the destination must be reported to the tour leader or some other representative of the tour operator as soon as possible. However, the tourist may allege a breach of contract if the tour organiser or some other trader upon whom the tour organiser has called, has acted dishonourably or with gross negligence in performance of the contract. (Consumer Agency, 2009.) In general the customer is expected to file the complaint within two months of returning home from the package tour (Verhelä, 2000, 33).

### *Sources of dissatisfaction in service encounters*

A service encounter can be defined in various ways. It may refer to a single interaction between the customer and an employee, where that interaction has a large influence on the customers' perception of the quality of the service offered (Moscardo, 2006, 236). A service encounter can also be used to signify a period of time during which the customer is indirectly in contact with the service provider (Bitner et al., 1990, 72). In this study the first interpretation of the term service encounter is adopted.

Usually dissatisfying service encounters are results of failures in the core services of the service delivery system. Such failures are for example shortcomings in cleanliness of the facilities, negligence in safety issues or poorly executed maintenance works (Moscardo, 2006, 270). Other reasons for dissatisfaction include insufficient or misleading information about a service, high prices, and inconsistent changes in quality (Johnston, 1995, 57). However, often the tangible elements of a package are less significant to the tourist than the experiences they gain. The traveller is partaking in the production of the package and hence the tourists' previous experiences, expectations and even moods can greatly influence how the package is perceived and evaluated. Thus, different customers can evaluate and experience the same event in different ways. Even the same customer can perceive the same event differently at different times (See for example Huovinen, 1999, 14; Komppula & Boxberg, 2005, 11). According to Bowie and Buttle (2004, 255), typical hospitality service failures include unavailable services that have been promoted; disappointing physical environment; slow service; and employees who do not care about, or are rude to, the customers.

Customers' perceptions about the severity of service delivery system failures are mostly influenced by how the contact employee handles the complaint situation. The most common reason for dissatisfaction is that the customer is not offered any kind of an apology, compensation or explanation for the failure. Also treating the customer inconsiderately



and failing to offer help rectifying the service failure causes dissatisfaction in the customers (Bitner et al, 1990, 81).

## Analysis and results

### *Research data*

The data of this study consists of 84 customer complaints filed to Suntours by customers during the winter period of 2006-2007. Due to the confidential nature of the complaints all demographic information had been removed by the company before the material was handed over to the researchers. Due to this the data was not analysed with respect to any demographic factors such as age, gender or socio-economic status. The complaints were varied and rich in both content and appearance and varied from a few lines sent over the Internet to hand written letters.

Reasons for the complaints could be found in all modules of the package tour product. However, for this study only incidents related to tour leaders were analysed. A careful classification produced 56 critical incidents related to tour leaders. Tour leaders were defined as the employed tour leaders of Suntours at the destination. Hence, sales personnel at travel agencies, flight attendants and other pre- or post-tour personnel were not regarded as tour leaders, although they definitely influence the packaged tourism experience.

Some quotations from the customer complaints will be presented where appropriate to illustrate both the conclusions of the researcher as well as the use of language in the customer complaints. However, since the data is originally in Finnish, the quotations have been translated by the authors. This might unintentionally have changed their original meaning.

### *Critical Incidents Technique in service encounters*

Bitner et al. (1990) conducted a study of critical service encounters to isolate the events and related behaviours of contact employees that cause customers to distinguish very satisfactory service encounters from very unsatisfactory ones. They identified three categories of employee behaviour, which accounted for all incidents. These categories were: employee response to service system failures, employee response to customer requests and needs, and unprompted and unsolicited employee actions. In the first category all incidents were related to a failure in the core service (product defects, such as cold food or unhygienic facilities, and slow or unavailable service). The factor determining the customers'

evaluation of the incident was the contact employees' way of responding to and handling of the failure. The second category arose from situations where the customer asked the contact employee to adapt the service to suit the customers' unique needs. In the third category events and employee behaviours were truly unexpected from the customers' point of view. Unsatisfactory incidents comprised of employees behaving in an unacceptable manner, such as lying or being rude. However, the behaviour could not be triggered by a failure in the service delivery system nor the result of a customer request.

Also Hoffman, Kelley, & Rotalsky (1995) examined employee recovery efforts related to service failures. They based their study on the service encounter classification identified by Bitner et al. (1990) but adapted their classification to the restaurant industry. The first category, employee responses to service delivery system failures, included product defects, slow or unavailable service, facility problems, unclear customer policies, and out of stock conditions. In the second category, employee response to customer requests and needs, dissatisfaction was created by food not being cooked to order and problems related to seating arrangements. Dissatisfying incidents related to unprompted or unsolicited employee behaviour was due to inappropriate employee behaviour. Some similarities between the subgroups of both studies can be found. For example, both studies include categories focusing on slow or unavailable service and employee behaviours. The differences between the subgroups are due largely to the industry-specific focus taken in the latter study.

### *Research methods*

The purpose of this study is to examine the sources of dissatisfaction on a package tour in general and especially related to tour leaders. The first research question, what causes dissatisfaction on a package tour, is analysed by categorising the data into primary and secondary complaint reasons.

To answer the second research question, what are the sources of dissatisfaction in relation to the tour leaders, content analysis using critical incidents is used. Critical incidents are identified from the data using the following criteria (see Bitner et al 1990 for more discussion about the selection criteria).

- Each incident involved interaction between the customer and the employee, in this case the tour leader. Complaints about other personnel (hotel staff, waiters at restaurants) were ignored.

- Each incident had to have been very dissatisfying from the customers' point of view. This was embedded in the data since customers do not complain in written form to the company unless the incident has been very critical.
- Each incident was a discrete episode. Hence, a complaint could contain more than one incident.
- Each incident had to contain sufficient detail for the researcher to be able to visualise it.

The incidents were grouped according to the reason that had triggered the dissatisfaction towards the tour leaders' behaviour. The grouping follows that of Bitner et al's (1990) study with the exception that information sharing, helping and guiding are seen as part of the core service. In the first categorisation all incidents were grouped into one of the three main categories. After that the incidents in each category were compared to ensure that similar issues were categorised in the same way. An independent but informed associate was also asked to read through and verify the results of the first categorisation.

### *Limitations*

CIT has been criticized for relying too heavily on participants' memories of possibly ancient incidents, and the recounts of the incidents may be inaccurate and distorted by time (Wils-Ips, van der Ven, & Pieters, 1998, 289). The incidents chosen and retold by the participants might also be distorted because they seek social approval from the researcher (Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000, 84). In this study the above mentioned problems have been solved by using actual customer complaints filed to the company shortly after the incident. The descriptions are, however, subjective interpretations of the dissatisfying events, not objective accounts. The data is also biased since it only focuses on the negative critical incidents. Furthermore, the data has neither been collected specifically for this study nor been collected by interviews conducted by the researcher. Hence the interpretations made during the analysis were not verified by the research subjects.

### *Sources of dissatisfaction on a package tour*

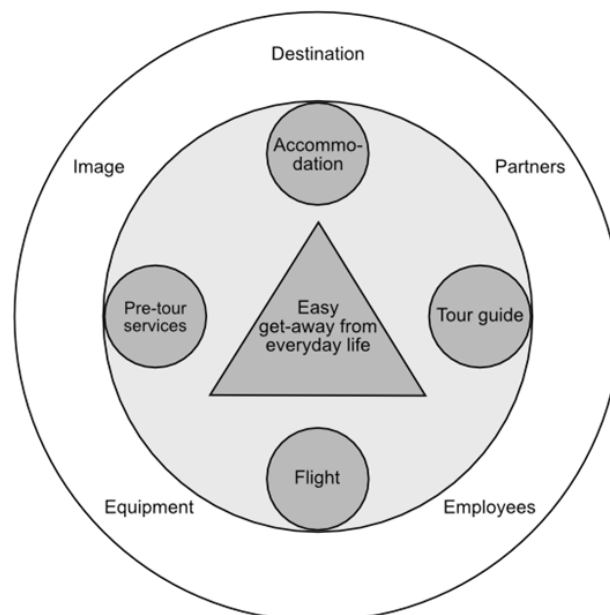
The customer complaints were given a primary and secondary (where applicable) complaint reason. Not all complaints contained more than one reason while some complaints contained more than two reasons. For these, only the two main reasons were recorded. The results are not statistically significant since the aim of the study is to give a qualitative overview of the material. The results are presented below in table 1.

*Table 1: Primary and secondary causes of dissatisfaction*

Source of dissatisfaction	Primary	Secondary	Total
Accommodation	39	14	53
Tour leaders at destination	17	25	42
Flight	19	7	26
Pre-tour services	9	18	27
No secondary reason		20	20
Total	84	84	148

The primary reason behind the complaint was the reason that was most emphasised. From the above table it can be seen that accommodation was clearly the most frequently mentioned primary complaint reason. Service failures related to the flight and tour leaders at the destination received roughly the same amount of primary complaints. However, when looking at the reasons for the secondary complaints, the tour leaders' actions at the destination are clearly the largest source of dissatisfaction.

From this categorisation a picture of a dissatisfying tour package product emerged. This is presented below in Figure 2. The core value of dissatisfaction is "easy get away from everyday life". This is the same value as is used to describe the package tour product in Figure 1 (See Komppula & Boxberg 2005 for discussion).



*Figure 2. Causes of dissatisfaction on a package tour (modified from Komppula & Boxberg 2005.)*

The core value is the value the customers feel they did not achieve related to some or all of the modules of the package tour product. The other parts of the dissatisfying package tour product consist of the tour organiser's pre-tour services at the home country, flights to and from the destination, accommodation at the destination and tour leaders' services at the destination. The outer layer of the figure consists of the tour organiser's image, partners, employees and equipment, as well as the destination itself.

Accommodation received the most mentions in the customer complaints. The hotel rooms were too small or dark, the view from the room was not what the tourist had expected or the room was unclean or damp. Many tourists complained about the hotel staff lacking language skills and service attitude. Also ongoing construction work at the hotel caused dissatisfaction.

The complaints related to the tour leaders are presented in more detail in the following section. The main causes for dissatisfaction with regard to tour leaders were a perceived lack of information, failure to help the tourists when problems arose, problems with separately purchased tours and the tour leaders' unfriendly behaviour.

Dissatisfaction related to flights to and from the destination was caused by delays, impolite flight attendants or discomfort during the flight. In some instances the flight delays also led to unexpected layovers at destinations where there were no tour leaders. In these instances tourists felt they were not properly informed about the changes in schedule.

In the group pre-tour services complainants were mainly dissatisfied with issues related to information and sales activities. The tourists complained about inaccuracies and discrepancies in the information on the tour operators Internet pages and brochures. For example, if the customers were not informed about planned construction works at the hotel already when they purchased the trip this caused dissatisfaction. Sales activities were related to unclear policies regarding the tour operators' customer loyalty programs as well as with impolite sales personnel.

### *Dissatisfaction with the tour leaders*

In the first category (employee response towards service delivery system failure) customers expressed dissatisfaction because the tour leader had not helped them, had not informed them properly or because the service had been slow. In the second group (employee response to customer needs and requests) the main reasons for dissatisfaction were that the tour leaders did not adjust the service according to the tourists wished

and needs. The third category (unprompted and unsolicited employee actions) contained the most varied reasons for dissatisfaction.

In the first group, employee response towards service delivery system failure, customers were dissatisfied with the tour leaders' reaction to, or way of handling a failure in the core service. The dissatisfying incident began with a failure in some part of the core service, but the tour leader's reaction to this failure strengthened the customer's dissatisfaction.

The most frequently mentioned incident leading to dissatisfaction was the lack of help from the tour leader when a significant failure in the room or hotel occurred. Also slow service was a source of dissatisfaction. In some instances the customer had to wait for days before getting the tour leaders' attention and help. Especially in instances where the customers had to change hotels during the vacation they felt they would have needed the tour leaders' help and expertise. The tour leaders are expected to know the area and its accommodations, and failing to disclose this information to the customers created dissatisfaction. This strengthens Jennings and Weiler's (2006, 59) notion that the tour leaders act as mediators at the destination.

Again we had to change rooms, this time to a different hotel. The tour leader was nowhere to be seen and we had to take a tuk-tuk and find the new hotel and deal with all the check-in formalities with the staff, who barely spoke English.

The customers expected more personal interaction in notifications regarding unusual circumstances such as flight delays. Dissatisfaction was caused by customers feeling neglected and not receiving enough information about the changes. Unfriendly answers to the customer's questions and concerns and leaving the customer in a hurry were experienced as particularly hurtful actions. In some customer complaints the tour leaders' words were colourfully recited and accounts accentuated with exclamation marks and capital letters, showing how deep a negative impact the encounter had made on the customer.

...the floor of our bathroom was constantly flooded... When we, once again, mentioned this to the tour leader the reply was "Go to the supermarket and buy a floor scrape, it shouldn't cost more than a Euro. Although I'm not sure they have any in the market, but you can search

The quality of information was another source of dissatisfaction, as both lack of information and giving misleading or inaccurate information to the customer were mentioned. The tour leaders' impatient or unfriendly attitude often heightened the customer's dissatisfaction. In many complaints the customer pointed out that the original failure in the core

service would not have prompted them to file a complaint had the tour leader handled the situation in a more appropriate way. People who go on package tours buy time for themselves and their spouses and families, as much as they buy a place to visit (Selännemi, 1996, 268). The time the tourist has to spend coping with a failure in the service delivery system is time away from this.

The tour leaders working at the office at that time [when the unsuitable day trip was sold] said that they'd never participated in the trip in question. --How can you have employees recommending and selling things they are not even familiar with??

The second group, employee response to customer needs and requests, described dissatisfaction resulting from the customer asking the tour leader for something outside the scope of the core service. Dissatisfaction resulted if the customer did not feel the tour leader accommodating these special requests. Dissatisfaction was even stronger in instances where the tour leader had first promised something outside the normal scope but failed to fulfil that promise. These empty promises left tourists feeling frustrated and angry.

The tour leader was satisfied when I told him that the matter had been taken care of and I also told him that I didn't think Suntours was really responsible for this. However I did expect more in terms of aftercare, but apparently your interest faded when I took care of the matter myself. --If you promise to contact me regarding this matter, is there any reason not to?

The other special need not accommodated according to the tourists was related cases of sudden illness. The tourists expected the tour leaders to help them if they fell ill during the tour. Customers expressed dissatisfaction over both the tour leaders not offering to help them at the hospital, as well as not advising the customers about medication. Tour leaders were also expected to offer the tourists certificates for insurance companies to prove illness during the vacation.

When I asked the tour leader for help on that second day at the hotel, that if she knew the name of some medicine that I could have picked up at the pharmacy, she said that she doesn't know anything about medicines! – I got the address to the doctor's office but nobody asked me if I would need help?

The third category is unprompted and unsolicited employee actions, in which critical incidents arose from the tour leader behaving in a way not seen suitable for a tour leader. Furthermore, the behaviour was not triggered by a failure in the service delivery system nor as a result of a customer need or request. Customers were dissatisfied by tour



leaders spending time with each other while ignoring the tourists at the destination or on tours. Inefficient action in handling the group of travellers, resulting in delays or other discomfort for the travellers was also mentioned. Surprisingly, this category also contained some positive remarks about the tour leaders. A few instances were recorded in the customer complaints about tour leaders offering to do something for the customers so they could enjoy themselves while on a day trip.

But now that we arrived at the airport we didn't get on the buses but had to stand outside in the pouring rain with all our luggage while the tour leaders, amongst themselves, were pondering how to arrange the people into lines.

## Lessons to be learned from customer complaints

The research questions for this study were what the sources for dissatisfaction are on package tours, and what the sources of dissatisfaction are in relation to the tour leaders. The data consisted of customer complaints filed to a Finnish tour organiser during the winter period 2006-2007. Qualitative research methods were used to answer the research questions.

The sources of dissatisfaction were analysed by looking at the primary and secondary reasons for dissatisfaction given in the complaints. When looking at primary complaint reasons it was seen that dissatisfaction is most frequently caused by failures in the core service of the package tour product. Four main categories emerged from the data. These were dissatisfaction with pre-tour services, the flights to and from the destination, the accommodation, and tour leaders at the destination. However, when looking at the combined primary and secondary complaint reasons, it can be seen that the behaviour of the tour leader at the destination was a significant reason for filing the customer complaint. In most customer complaints the failure of a tangible service element was merely the starting point of the dissatisfying event.

Dissatisfaction with the tour leaders was analysed in more detail using critical incidents technique. The dissatisfying incidents fell in to three main categories. In employee response towards service delivery system failure, dissatisfaction was caused by the tour leaders' unwillingness or inability to help the tourist, especially related to changing accommodation. Slow service, giving information of poor quality, insufficient personal interaction, and an impatient or unfriendly attitude towards the tourist were other dissatisfying behaviours. In employee response to customer needs and requests tourists complained about the tour leaders not fulfilling the promises they had made to the tourists, as well as not helping

them if they fell ill during the holiday. In the last category, unprompted employee response, tourists felt that the tour leaders ignored them or took insufficient action in guiding the group of tourists.

It can be seen from the customer complaints that there are some discrepancies between the expected and the actual content of the tour leaders' responsibilities and services offered on a group package tour. Most cases of dissatisfaction are caused by the service encounter not meeting the customers' expectations (Reynolds & Harris, 2005, 331). This is usually due to a difference of opinion about what constitutes the core service with regard to tour leaders on group package tours. Possible solutions to reducing this discrepancy are either to better inform the tourists about the content of tour leaders' services on the group package tour, or modifying the service to better comply with customers expectations. Special attention should be paid to information distribution in the event of a service delivery system failure, and providing additional help in these instances.

This information discrepancy has more far-reaching implications. As customers engage in reminiscing about memorable, critical, incidents with their friends and family after returning home, they inevitably shape the expectations and attitudes of these potential customers towards both tour leaders and group package tours. Hence group package tour organisers need to pay even more attention to satisfying their customers and eliminating sources of dissatisfaction. The fact that tourists have such varying expectations and needs with regard to mediation makes it more challenging for the tour operator to implement appropriate mediation, training and evaluation.

Tour operators need to pay special attention to enabling the tour leaders at the destination to react to failures in the service delivery system in a clear and coherent manner. On a package holiday the customer should get standardised service and this should include the tour leaders' services. This means that every tour leader should react to the customer's wishes and concerns in the same, friendly, way. Services are largely dependent on personal interactions between the customer and the contact employee. Due to the subjective nature of experiences, these interactions are very difficult to standardize and quality control is nearly impossible. (Bowie & Chang 2005; Komppula & Boxberg, 2005.) Thus, special attention should be paid to this aspect both during training and when designing tools for the tour leaders. Tour operator's internal blogs and discussion forums for tour leaders might offer some additional means for this. The customers should also feel that the tour leader is on their side no matter what. Hence, it might be beneficial for the tour operator to empower and give the necessary tools to the tour leaders to perform quality control of local service providers if customers require this.

The data in the customer complaints is rich and would lend itself to further studies. Using varied qualitative and quantitative research methods more information could be extracted from the data. It would, for example, be interesting to examine the relation between the source of dissatisfaction and the preferred mode of compensation. Also variations in country-specific customer complaints might add useful insight to the current debate about the role of tour leaders in creating tourist experiences.

Group package tours and mass tourism change and evolve over time. Traditionally tour leaders have acted as mediators between the tourist and the destination, ensuring a smooth transition to a foreign culture and place. Recent technical and educational developments have, however, made it easier and less expensive for people to organise, and even mediate, their own holidays. This puts additional emphasis on how the tour leader is seen and treated by both tour operators and customers. If tourists feel the tour leader is genuinely there to help them, this could easily be the tour organiser's most critical selling point, as illustrated by below comment from one of the customer complaints analysed for this study.

I rarely travel on package tours anymore, but I have been under the impression that the strength of group package tours is the fact, that the tour leaders are pillars on whom one can lean on when in trouble.

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## Showing respect. On having an ethical approach at the guided tours of a mosque on Södermalm, Stockholm

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Needless to say, tours in general and visits to sacred sites in particular can be framed in a variety of ways and with a variety of effects. For example, juxtapose the tourists standing in line to see the Duomo in Florence with pupils on a school visit to a Hare Krishna temple. Or the Jordanian king and queen's entertainment activity with the Swedish king and queen at the mosque in Stockholm compared with the police escorted entry of Ariel Sharon to al-Haram ash-Sharif (although he never crossed the threshold to the al-Aqsa Mosque), or the Temple Mount, in Jerusalem. These are all examples of how going to see places can differ in their framing, and that is within the field of tours to religious sites alone. Visits can be set as sightseeing, as part of a school curriculum, a formal tour of Sweden, a political gambit or a mix of these and other conditions. Following that, tours perform different spaces; the backpacker, the package tourist or the pilgrim would experience Taj Mahal in quite different ways (Edensor 1998, 2001; Sheller & Urry 2004: 7). This paper will be dealing with one such framing, namely how the guided tours of the Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahayan mosque in central Stockholm relates to the talk of multiculturalism, and, further, the effects of such a framing, namely showing respect.

In the year 2000, the first 'official' mosque in Stockholm was inaugurated, ending a more than 20 year long struggle to make that happen. The process had been one in which many emotions were stirred. Finding a place that all involved would consider proper for a mosque seemed hard. Issues concerned what a (subsequently lowered) minaret and a dome would look like in the urban landscape of central Stockholm. Some critical voices stated it rather belonged in one of the suburbs, where they claimed most of the Muslims lived. And would it not ruin the skyline of Södermalm where it was to be housed in a former power station? Would it blend in? So, the chief argument was not about having a mosque at all, it was rather a debate over which place could contain a mosque.



The building itself has an interesting history. Being an example of an early welfare construction made the Stockholm City Museum, which holds the expertise for the City of Stockholm in such matters, deem it a cultural heritage site. That the architect Ferdinand Boberg was well renowned is something that speaks of the high esteem in which these new communal buildings were held at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Further, Boberg was inspired by the styles he had encountered on his trips to Morocco and other parts of North Africa, and Spain. And, perhaps by sheer luck, the long sides of the house are oriented to face Mecca.

At the time of the inauguration Islamiska Förbundet i Stockholm (Islamic Association in Stockholm) also started offering guided tours of the mosque, which, in practice, also was a continuation of earlier study visits that some of the congregations had received in the “underground mosques”. These tours have been very successful and today form a considerable part of the daily routines. My dissertation is based on participant observations at those guided tours of the great mosque at Södermalm in central Stockholm, Sweden, and interviews with guides and visitors. Further, I am going to use some media materials and official documents. Central arguments will concern the conditions, necessities and possibilities of self-presentation, where self-presentation will concern not only the guides’ performances but also what positions visitors assume in asking questions. But I will also, among other issues, address questions regarding multiculturalism as an ideal model for handling diversity. And, further yet, how the personal is desired at the tours as a means of knowing something about the universal.

### *Framing the tours*

I feel it necessary to comment on the role of the tour guide in this setting. Perhaps more so than in other guiding, I think the guides at the mosque are expected to represent themselves on a personal level. And this is not a one-dimensional argument, meaning that in other settings guides do not face these problems. I appreciate, for example, that intimacy may be of strategic use for creating warm sentiments or a sense of togetherness at tours (Widtfeldt Meged presentation at 1st International Research Forum on Guided Tours 24th April 2009). Or that the “emotional labour” of having and maintaining positive feelings and working to stifle undesired mind-sets or managing annoyance has a significant part in the experience of guiding tour groups (Keser & Çolakoğlu presentation at 1st International Research Forum on Guided Tours 24th April 2009). That way the personal is always on display at tours but can be perceived both as a resource for storytelling and intimacy, or a force that might support or interfere with preferred emotional responses.

What I am saying then is that a tour of the Zayed mosque on Södermalm



to a considerable extent also becomes a tour of the guide. Whereas the presentations of the guides mostly concern the building itself and Islam in general (basic facts about the five pillars and explaining the rituals and so on) the other half of the tour is a time for questions and at those times the personal is more in focus. But the personal is interesting mostly in the way that it appeals to the universal. Kyrre Kverndokk (2007), who has written a thesis on Norwegian pupils visiting death and concentration camps from World War II, also addresses questions about the connections between universalism and personal stories. Drawing on the works of Tim Cole, Kverndokk (2007:19-20) refers to how the story of Anne Frank, in the process of being transformed from a diary into a book and into a movie, growingly is presented as interesting not for being a description of the situation of a Jewish person, or the story of a young woman exploring her sexuality, but for its capacity to say something on the universal human condition.

Similarly, the personal anecdotes of the guides are used to say something on humanity. But they are also asked for by the visitors to say something about the conditions for articulating a Muslim identity or living a Muslim life in Sweden, in the West or even more generally of Muslims all over the world (as with the cases when the guides have been talking about the Hajj and the situation in Mecca during that time). That way, conversations at the tours are partly directed at what can be desired and/or acceptable ingredients in a diverse or multicultural society. If questions concerning what should be the guidelines for an ideal society arise during the visits, but acts at the tours are also spoken of as being part in such games. In that setting, respect is used in the ongoing interaction as a way of talking about them and understanding them.

### *Showing respect*

One theme in the interviews and small talk about the tours has been respect. The will to show respect, or the need for showing respect, often articulated in relation to recognition of Muslims in Sweden as a disprivileged minority. Respect seems to be a concept that is used to make ethics of abstract ideas about, for example, human rights and multiculturalism; it presents itself as a tool to handle these abstracts in concrete day to day life. At the bottom of the discussions is “the ethical question /.../: ‘How ought I to treat you?’” (Butler 2005:25). A question which is conditioned by the way an ‘I’ and a ‘you’ come about at all and the structures of social norms that makes the appearance of the other possible. Respect is moreover an active word, meaning that it is interlinked with doing and interaction (Gaskell 2006). It can be

shown, earned, extended, gotten and so on. There has to be a giving and a receiving part.

The most absorbing and frequently used of the issues that have been brought up in connection with respect in the interviews is the dress code required when attending the tours. That code involves modest dressing and taking your shoes off upon entering the mosque. This means no short sleeves, no shorts and no bare stomachs or shoulders. The dress code moreover contributes to establishing the sanctity of the place, defining it as a holy place, in which case for example taking the shoes off is a well known symbol for communicating that holiness. In one sense the demand for women to cover themselves forms a part of making it an integral part of Islam (Parekh 2000:198).

An obviousness in relation to wearing the robe is quite often articulated. Like the tours in general the dress code seems to remind the visitors of trips abroad (foremost around the Mediterranean), mostly communicated to me in little commentaries during the tours. Irene, who works in engineering at a globally active company, often joins the activities of the social club at the rather large workplace. During the interview she talks repeatedly of all the people she has met through work and how it forms a sort of culturally diverse place in many aspects. We had been talking briefly about wearing the robe earlier and I later asked whether it bothered her wearing it.

Irene

No, it didn't cause that's something you've seen on the telly that they have. I was prepared for that. And I think that of course you have to show some respect for another religion. I mean I've been, not a lot but still abroad a few times and gone to catholic churches where I [had to cover the] shoulders and things like that. So I do it. You have to show each other respect. You certainly should. And, really, I didn't care. I figure, alright, I'll be taking this off in a while and that's that.

Her having no problem wearing it comes out of being aware that such conventions are practiced in many other holy places as well. It is also the brevity that makes it harmless. The position she is taking up is that of a knowing subject. The knowledge of what will be demanded of her (that comes from the telly and trips abroad) gives her agency and certainty on what to do when in the mosque. Irene knows what it means to show respect at this particular occasion and therefore feels confident.

On the one hand the dress code is articulated as universal, it applies to anyone entering the mosque. On the other hand he feels it necessary to articulate that "it's the same for men". But, even if men ideally have to dress modestly it is applied differently. For example, one of the male

guides at one of the tours I participated in wore a t-shirt, which would presumably be a violation of those rules. Others except Irene repeats brevity as an argument why one should not direct too much attention to that issue and reducing the seriousness of the matter. This is a stance that could perhaps partly be interpreted as among other things being fed up with the seemingly oft repeated connection between Islam and gender equality.

Britta

'Cause that's what it's about really, a respect for what people in their room sort of opt for, how things should be arranged or not. I mean ... But that's the sort of respect you should show. Like if you go into a church on the continent in shorts. You can't. I mean, they'll stop 'em, 'cause one would like to show that this is another place from being on the beach. And of course, that kind of, how can I put it, not rules but how people choose to live, then you just got to have some sense of respect.

The mosque certainly is not the only place where girls learn that they should be ashamed of bare stomachs and dress properly (cf. Skeggs 1997). But it is a message reiterated at the tours as well, that the responsibility to show respect and dress well is first and foremost a thing those categorized as women have to think about.

To give a further example of how respect is talked about in the interviews I will quote Pernilla, a teacher of a high school class in a southern suburb of Stockholm. In late 2004 I participated in hers and the class' study visit to the mosque. Respect is much present in documents stating the school's outlook on equity and basic values that should guide everyone's conduct at school, employed and pupils alike (cf. Runfors 2003: 245). Pernilla reiterates this when talking about what is central in her teaching and describes it as a main thread in her lessons "this respect for the beliefs and lifestyles of other human beings".

She was talking about that there can be a repressive side to respect as well, which in excess holds you back from saying what you want. This over-respectfulness hinders what she seems to be considering a possibility of an open conversation, where you would ask any question that comes to mind.

Pernilla

I went to India this summer and met a self-appointed god, Siva Shankar Baba, who has a congregation of 350 members who live there and work for him for free and worship him as a god. And it was the same thing there, it gives/ Well, [we were] there to see it and they showed us around the premises. And we didn't come up with one single critical question. (Laughter) And I mean, you're

totally raised to like, all you've ever been taught is to be critical of things at all times. But in a way you turn out to be, well, overly respectful somehow. I don't really know what that is but you, well/ I've really put some thought into that, 'cause all of a sudden you're so lame. But I also think it's wrong if the teacher takes up too much time and that, well, the pupils should be given more space.

It appears to be the temporary position of being a guest, of not feeling at home, that delimits Pernilla's space to act. Something feels different and she talks of her self in negative terms like being lame. Someone else sets the agenda and Pernilla is disappointed with her performance, that lack of conveying a diverging view on the issues of religion. She cannot be critical the way she has been raised to, which might differently refer to that it is hard to be judgmental given the preconditions of the interaction.

In one sense then the tours become a visit at the others, a way of framing and encounter "the 'exotic' and the different" in which tourism plays a role more generally as well (Edensor & Kothari 2004:195). That link, further, provides a desired manner of interaction which has to do with accepting and meeting the demands of the hosts. Indeed, these tours do something to the host/guest (tourist) dichotomy (cf. Urry & Sheller 2004:7). Islam is generally spoken of as an imported religion, i.e. that is not natural to Sweden, previous research has shown that Muslims are not only viewed as foreigners but as the stranger par excellence (Hvidtfelt 1998). Being given the opportunity to and in fact building an official mosque has made possible establishing an Islamic order in that place and has provided a place to host. Following that, the tours become an opportunity for the organizations in the mosque and for the guide to give an own (and personal) version of what Islam is and means.

This also brings about the right to set the rules for how to behave and what is permitted within those walls; a switching of norms that is preconditioned and made possible by the very existence of the mosque. All visitors are asked to take their shoes off upon entering the mosque and women are asked to wear a robe with a hood throughout the tour. That is conditional for going on a tour. It is of course conditional for any visitor who come to pray or study as well to take their shoes off and for the women to cover, and that is also talked of in terms of respect – respect for god. But as the visitors rationalizes their acts is in terms of showing respect it becomes a way of articulating themselves as autonomous individuals, someone with a choice. Although the options not to cover or not taking the shoes off are always conceivable I have not experienced that someone in the end actually has refused doing it, although it might of course make some refrain from going there at all. By terming their acts as

showing respect it becomes feasible to present oneself as someone who has the upper hand. This resembles other ways of being benevolent that are based on perceiving yourself as being in a position of knowing what the right thing to do is. Like toleration it can only be put into effect from an empowered position.

### *Mutual respect*

Finally, I would like to address the question of mutuality as in the ideal mutual respect, concerning which I think it is quite clear that the main burden of showing respect is on the shoulders of the visitors. I would see that as an effect of the switching of the norms as well. Because, what on a basic level is contained in showing respect at the mosque to a large extent involves what the guides are used to and perhaps habitually performs.

Richard Sennett has argued that inequality and mutual respect might coexist in social rituals (Sennett 2003:210). If we were to view the guided tours as such a ritual it may well be easy to equate respect with a feeling of (or at least a desire for) equality, meaning for example providing for an encounter on terms that will give all interlocutors a chance to speak. But subordination can convincingly be said to be a part of the experience for several of the involved as well.<sup>1</sup> Like the guide seeing a chance to tell another story of Muslims in Sweden. Or the teacher who felt she could not ask any question that came to her mind since she had to show respect. Feeling “overly respectful”, which was the words she used, could in that case perhaps also translate into feeling repressed. But the point I am making is that in the interview with me she did not articulate it in terms of being repressed, whereby she would have placed agency in the hands of the guide (or the Muslim if you will). She presented it to me in that situation as a choice she made (and makes) of holding back critique of what she thinks weird, unequal or issues that if questioned would put the authority of the guide at stake.

### *Conclusion*

As much as respect is a concept used for talking about the experiences at the guided tours of the Zayed mosque and an ethics guiding the interaction, it still produces power along the lines of hierarchical structures. Being knowledgeable or informed seems to be one of the key issues concerning respect and seeking knowledge in this way appears to be connected with showing respect. In this paper I have focused on how one of the effects of the practice of showing respect serves to reproduce these inequalities. Although the visitors acts may be accommodating, they still produce subjects with the ability to opt for extending respect to another subject,

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<sup>1</sup> Thank you Anette Hallin for your thought provoking comment on my presentation.

that is articulated as disprivileged (cf. Runfors 2003: 251). Further, all takes place in a mosque, a room that directs our attention to Sweden as a “diaspora space” (Brah 2004: 37), pointing at how continuous mobilities keep affecting local debate (cf. Farahani 2007: 39). Although, I am aware of that looking at other subject positions, except the position as teacher, would have made me see something else. For example, the interplay between the teacher, additionally positioned as woman and representative of a school, a secular institution meeting a guide who simultaneously holds positions as man and religious representative. And further analysing sex, for instance, would have balanced the discussion on who has the upper hand in the above situation.

But as I have been trying to argue, conceptualizing the acts of wearing the robe as showing respect talks to the multicultural framing. It is towards the Other that respect has to be shown, someone has to tolerate and an other has to be tolerated, furthering the hierarchical positions. The awareness of the intricacy of the situation demands a way of handling it. Showing respect then becomes a viable technique of presenting oneself as treating the other justly, of having an ethical approach.

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## Guides' Intercultural Strategies in an Interaction Perspective

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Having been a guide for many years I found that the tourists' behaviour and questions had a great impact on my work, and each tour differed even if many aspects remained the same. The interaction with the tourists was a part of a learning process. Now as Ph.D. student, I find the interaction between guide and guided has been given sporadic attention in tourism literature (see Schmidt 1979, Pearce 1984, Edensor 1998, Bruner 2005 and Tucker 2007) Most of the early research employed a structuralist approach focussing on the limiting influence of the setting. For example Catherine Schmidh (1979: 457) found:

..there is little interaction between tourists in the group... The guide is often speaking most of the time and structural factors of the setting (such as sitting in the coach, walking single file down narrow corridors) prevent interaction

Later research moved towards constructivist, performative and discursive approaches that are sensitive to the microphysics of the interactions and dialogue. Bruner (2005: 166) notes the guides

frequently depart from the official scripts and move off in their own directions, and the tourists bring their own concerns and interests to the interaction. The result is a very open format, more like a discussion than a lecture, one that allows for improvisation and that facilitates the constructivist process

It is exactly this constructivist process which can be observed through the interactions between guides and tourists and are explored in my Ph.D. thesis, where I pose the question "What kind of interactions are taking place between the actors on the guided tours, and what impact do interactions have on the tourism performance on a guided tour?"

## Methodological approach and theoretical considerations

The use of video was one way to capture such interactions as videos can be played over and over again enabling the extraction of various layers and digging still deeper into the material. The disadvantage is the camera is just one eye pointing in one direction, whereas with participant observation, the researcher can capture the impression of a situation as a whole and write down their first reflections. There are also practical aspects, as not all incoming agencies allowed me to videotape on the tours, and when I was allowed, it would be very hard to videotape an entire three or five hours tour. Therefore a combination of the two has been used. Interactions are first and foremost observed when happening, but to gain an insight into how the actors perceive and reflect on their roles on the guided tour, I made some follow up interviews.

During the summers of 2005 and 2006 I undertook participant observation on 17 guided tours in and around Copenhagen, using a video camera on 11 of them. I observed 14 certified guides working in four different languages (English, German, Italian and Spanish). The group size varied from 17 participants on a walking tour to 71 on a City Sightseeing tour in a double-decker coach. I covered different types of tours including nine City Sightseeing tours by coach, one walking tour, one canal tour and four thematic tours out of Copenhagen of which three were “Kings and Castles” to North Zealand and one was “Dragør” a romantic village just outside Copenhagen. On four occasions I made follow-up interviews with a total of 11 tourists, and I have interviewed four of the 14 guides.

The collected material - videos, observation notes and interviews - have been transcribed in a programme called ADVENE (Annotate Digital Video, Exchange on the NET), that allows for processing the data, into categories of annotation cutting across the material and still keeping each annotation attached to their bite of a video or interview. ADVENE makes it suitable to work along the lines of grounded theory - a bottom-up theory generating approach to qualitative research. In grounded theory the researcher

does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge (Strauss and Corbin 1990:23)

Grounded theory has an inductive approach and is based on the collection of empirical material enabling the researcher to “use and integrate a substantive body of literature”( Connell & Lowe 1997: 167). Having my empirical focus on interactions, and social practises I have been inspired by the sociologist Harold Garfinkels` Studies in Ethnomethodology (1967)

Garfinkel argues that members of society must (in fact) have some shared methods for achieving social order that they use to mutually construct the meaningful orderliness of social situations (Rawls 2003: 10)

Analyzing the material I believe to have found shared methods and recognizable patterns in the interactions between tourists and guides, and in this article I will explore the interactions from the guides' perspective with a focus on the guides' intercultural strategies.

## The guides' perspective

The frame of the guided tour has a voluntary and playful character with blurred boundaries, and Holloway (1980:389) argues that "the guide while "an authority" is not "in authority". The guides' space of action is in part defined by the degree of authority vested in the guide's role. According to Cohen (1985) the guide's role is to be found in the mediatory and the leadership spheres. The certified guides work mainly in the mediatory sphere, where they have to disseminate information about the destination, which takes up the bulk of the communication and interaction between guides and tourists. As cultural mediators, the guides are expected to be "an authority" on their body of knowledge, but they are not "in authority" as they cannot demand the tourists to listen and/or stay put. As cultural mediators I found the guides rely on their ability to attract and keep the attention of the tourists by applying what I term a range of seductive strategies.

The certified guides in Copenhagen work as what I will call semi-professionals. They have no steady contractual relation with a single employer, but they are booked from tour to tour and the guides work for many different employers. Most of the guides are paid and pay tax like regular wage earners, and many are members of a union and have unemployment insurance, but they are hired by the hour or rather by the tour, which places them in the same category as freelancers and free professionals. As a counterweight to the transience of this work relationship between guides and employers, the bureaus often cultivate their relationship with favourite guides. They need to do so in order to get the better guides and to ensure a sufficient number of guides in the peak season, where the demand by far exceed the supply. At the same time, the guides want to create more stable relationships with employers in order to get the most attractive tours, and to secure work in the low and middle seasons.

However a guide may work for one employer in the morning, another in the afternoon, and a third one the next day, and their work identity is more linked to their profession, than to the employer who has booked them for the tour in question. The actual performance of the guided tour is detached in time and space from the agents, who design, organize, handle and sell the tour. This detachment also influences the tourists' perception of the relationship between guide and industry. Geva and Goldman (1991:178) argue that

The bond that develops between the guide and the tour participants is stronger than the bond between them and the tour company.

The tourists do not necessarily identify the guide with the company where they bought the tour and

The participants often perceive the guide as the one, by virtue of his resourcefulness and expertness, is likely to provide solutions for problems caused by the company, and as one correcting the company's mistakes (Geva & Goldman 1991:178)

This places the certified guides in a position between the business strategy based on economic rationality (see De Certeau 84:36) and the tourists' who as consumers or end users apply tactics to make their performance habitable (see De Certeau 84:xiii). The guides are both working on the premises of, and are a part of a strategy belonging to the industry. However being co-present in time and space with the end users, the guides sometimes have to act at a tactical level together with the tourists to make a performance succeed within a tight often standardized commercial frame that neither calculates with a large number of individual variables among the participating actors nor with unforeseen incidences. The guides are professionals that make new performances over and over again in close contact with the tourists and the guides develop strategies in their guiding based on experience and in response to the tourists' interactions.

I believe Bordieu's (1990) notion of habitus can help to inform the guide's strategies

Habitus can be translated as the value and norm systems, cultural habits and systems of attitudes that individuals – and many individuals collectively – use for orientation. Habitus are the embodied and cognitive structures on which humans base their actions, their opinions and the choice they make – in short their practise. (Bordieu & Wacquant 1996:106 in Joachim Ohrt Fehler 2009)

Habitus is a generative system of dispositions generated by an actors' or a group of actors past experience/history and the actors position in the

field. Habitus is an embodied and cognitive internalisation of external structures and it does not necessarily operate on a conscious level. However this does not mean that actors are reproducing themselves mechanically as Bordieu explains,

Habitus aims to transcend of determinism and freedom, conditioning and creativity, consciousness and unconsciousness or the individual and the society. Because the habitus is an infinite capacity for generating products – thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions – whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production, the conditioned and conditional freedom is as remote from the creation of unpredictable novelty as it is far from simple mechanical reproduction of the original conditioning (Bordieu 1990:55)

The guides' habitus is the generative system of dispositions which is based on past experience through the guide education, the experience they build up through repeated performances and their position in the field of the guided tour. Beyond the guide profession, the guide is of course also a person with a habitus that is generated by the actors' full course of life. Guides by profession are however identifiable as a group of actors within the field of the guided tour. The actors' position in the field depends on their relative amount of capital, and capital can be understood as the actors' resources and competences that give a relative possibility to exercise power and influence in the field. The guides' possibility to exercise power in the field of the guided tour is primarily based on their cultural capital, and through their work guides exchange their cultural capital to economic capital. The guides develop a system of strategies generated by habitus in order to perform the exchange and to maximize the exchange rate for the cultural capital. In the following I will explore the intercultural strategies practised by the guides in order to attract and keep the attention of the tourists, and thus maximise the outcome of the performance.

## Guides' intercultural strategies

Tourism is almost synonymous with the intercultural meeting, and on all the tours I observed, there were intercultural elements at stake between the tourists, the guides and the destination in various combinations. Firstly, the tourists were all foreigners visiting Denmark. The members of the groups were either a mix from several countries, or in some cases all from one country. Secondly seven of guides I observed were born Danish, the other seven were born in other countries (Italy, Argentina,

Sweden and Finland) but all now living in Denmark. Four out of the 14 guides were guiding in their mother tongue (Italian or Spanish), the rest guided in their second, third or fourth language. The tours were a mix of the possible combinations e.g. a Danish born guide guiding in English and German for a mixture of tourists from, America, UK, Germany, Austria and France, or a Swedish born guide guiding in English for a mixed group of tourists from UK; Malta and USA, or an Italian born guide guiding in Italian for an exclusively Italian group. The guides used the intercultural suspense between the tourists, the destination and not least their own cultural identity as a strategy to infuse energy into the narratives and even create a leitmotif in their narratives.

Earlier research on the intercultural meeting between guides and tourists has been concerned with e.g. the guides' perception of differences between various tourists nationalities judged on a number of predefined parameters (see Pizam & Sussmann 1995, Pizam & Jeong 1996) or tourists' behaviour has been scrutinized in regard to Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance dimension as a direct function of the tourists' nationality (Litvin et al. 2004). Other studies examining how different tourists by nationality perceive the guides intercultural competences measured on a number of predefined parameters nonverbal as well as verbal (see Leclerc & Martin 2004).

Iben Jensen (2000, 2004) argues that culture is not just linked to nationality, and cultural belonging cannot be defined by outside measures.

Intercultural communication (between parties) is ".....who identify themselves as distinct from one another in cultural terms" (Collier & Thomas 1988:100). The definition differs from the dominant thinking by taking its point of departure in the actor rather than in the culture. It is the interpretation of the participant that determine what culture the person belongs to (Jensen 2004:4)

Jensen (2000, 2004) proposes four analytical tools with which to examine intercultural communication, which refers to practitioners' everyday experiences. The first tool is the actors' "cultural presuppositions" which refers to knowledge, experience, feelings and opinions we have towards categories of people that we do not regard as members of the cultural communities that we identify ourselves" (Jensen 2004:8). To find an actor's cultural presuppositions we have to follow the construction and the descriptions of the "other". Jensen argues that "they" are very often described as the "inadequate other" while our own culture is idealised. The second tool is the actors' cultural self-perception that "is the ways in which an actor expresses a cultural community as the one he or she identifies with" (Jensen 2004:9). This is done by following the "we"



construction in the communication. Actors often idealize their cultural community and “cultural self-perception” is often hidden as “the right way” to organize life. The third tool is culturally fixed points, which are the focal points that arise in communication between two actors who both feel they represent a certain topic. For a topic to be seen as a ‘culturally fixed point’ it requires that both actors identify with this topic.(Jensen 2004:9) The fourth tool is the positions of experiences, which refers to the fact that all interpretations are bounded in individual experiences, but although the experiences are subjective, they are related to the social position of a person (Jensen 2004: 6). Here the analyst has to listen where and how an actor tells about his/her primary experiences, how it influences the actors’ position in the culture and how this subsequently influences the actors’ interpretation of the communication process.

My concern is not to understand how tourists or guides perceive each other as a function of their nationalities, but rather to examine how the actors interpret and negotiate their cultural positions and identities, and how the guides use the intercultural suspense in discursive constructions as a seductive strategy to attract and keep the attention of the tourists. Intercultural communication is studied as situated practises in dialogues where both parties are of equal importance and therefore the tourists’ reaction to the intercultural strategies is an integrated part of the analysis.

### *The guides’ cultural presuppositions of the tourists’ presuppositions*

When the tourists arrive in Denmark they have cultural presuppositions about the country they visit. The tourists may have obtained their knowledge from a great variety of sources; guidebooks, history, the media, friends, the Internet etc., and partly through questions from the tourists, the guides themselves build up ideas of the tourists’ presuppositions. This is what I call the guides’ presuppositions of the tourists’ presuppositions. The guides’ may insert elements from what they believe are the tourists presuppositions in their narratives in order to make connections between the tourists’ images of the destination and actual destination. This can be done in a variety of ways.

One example was the guide who, on a canal tour, several times referred to the Danes as Vikings completely out of the historical context of the Viking age, which was from around year 800 to 1050. Sailing through Holmen a fashionable island in Copenhagen, the boat passed expensive new condominiums built right on the water front, with private boat berths for the residents’ boats. The guide explained that sailboats are not very expensive in Denmark and the Danes as old Vikings make these boats. Later we passed an old mast crane from the 18’th century, and she explained that it took a lot of Vikings to work with the crane. Vikings

ceased to exist around 1050, and it is indeed a free interpretation to call present day Danish boat builders or 18'th century workmen Vikings, but referring to the Danes as Vikings, she links to one of the cultural presuppositions, she believes the tourists have of the Danes.

Another guide would refer explicitly in a narratives to what she believed was the tourists' presuppositions of Copenhagen as "Wonderful Copenhagen" a fairytale city linked to the writer Hans Christian Andersen. The guide explained;

You heard me right Wonderful Copenhagen, this is also the epithet of the official tourist organisation WOCO Wonderful Copenhagen, and derives from the movie made of the life of Hans Christian Andersen..... He was born 1805 and I think everybody knows Hans Christian Andersen the famous fairy tale bird and one of the most famous Danes

Just as the guides may enhance and cultivate the tourists' presuppositions about Danish culture they may do the opposite and dismantle them. A classical presupposition is that Denmark was one of the few nations, where the population really stood up for their Jewish compatriots during Second World War. However history can produce myths, and one such myth is that the Danish King Christian X wore the Jewish star on his clothes during 2. World War, when he went on his daily tours horseback riding through the street of Copenhagen. It is a story that many tourists have heard, but it is not true, and one guide explained in an interview her attitude to fabricated history.

And then once one of the tourists said" oh yes, but King Christian rode with the star on" And then I said "yes that is a very sweet story", but now we are not to tell anything incorrect as guides, so we have to stick to the truth, and this was not correct. But he did ride every day, and that made people happy about him

This guide emphasized that guides in general have to be historically correct about their information, even if the tourists may be a little disappointed. In fact several guides dismantled the myth about the Christians X, when passing a statue of him in Copenhagen, even if they were not asked about the topic. However exactly how correct guides have to be in their historical information is very much interpreted by the guides themselves, and is up for negotiation between the guides and the tourists, as we shall see in a later section about culturally fixed-points.

The guides may or may not be right in their presuppositions of the tourists' presuppositions. Several guides believe that the tourists expect to see a more glamorous and bigger statue of the Little Mermaid, and that the tourists are in for a disappointment when they get to see the real

thing, a statue which is just about 1:1 in human size. One guide would try to lessen the assumed disappointment, by warning the tourists about the small size of the statue, before arriving to the sight. When the group came back after seeing the statue, one tourist said to the guide “She is not that small”. At first, the guide did not hear the remark correctly and thought the tourist agreed with her statement, then she found out that the tourists disagreed, and she became somewhat confused. Back on the coach, the guide followed up on the statement collectively, and she asked in the microphone with great surprise in her voice “So you did not find her too small?” It is a widely held cultural presupposition between guides and future guides that the tourists’ expect something more spectacular and larger when it comes to one of the most – if not THE most - known tourist sight in Copenhagen.

A group of guides-to-be, students at Tourist Guide Diploma Programme set out to investigate their cultural presupposition of the tourists’ presuppositions, working with the hypothesis “The tourists’ get disappointed when they see the Little Mermaid”. They interviewed 75 tourists from 32 countries picked at random, while they were paying a visit to the Little Mermaid, the tourists were asked if the statue lived up to their expectations, and what they thought about her. 56 tourists said that the statue lived up to or exceeded their expectations, 2 answered she lived up to their expectations to some degree, while 17 said they were a little disappointed and only one said he was very disappointed. The little survey indicates that the tourists generally had a positive experience of the statue, and the ones who were a little disappointed were not asked why they were disappointed. Instead they were asked the more open question, “What might in your opinion make this attraction better?” and the tourists mainly wanted to have more information on the site, about the statue and the story behind her. On the site there is absolutely no information available, so unless the tourists are on guided tour, the tourists are left to their own sources of information.

The guides’ cultural presupposition of the tourists’ expectations may stem from remarks from tourists over time, and as the survey also indicated, not ALL the tourists had their expectations met. However it may also reflect the guides own taste, maybe they themselves find her too small and boring, or it could reflect an inferiority complex in the Danish cultural self-perception. The landmark of Denmark could be conceived as a small unpretentious sad looking mermaid placed on a rock on the shores of the sound. The statue is not illuminated at night, there are no billboards to explain about her story, and only a couple of small vendors sell t-shirts, souvenirs and roasted almonds on the site. This is far from the grand and self promoting landmarks of other big cities in the world e.g. the Liberty Statue in New York or the Tour Eiffel in Paris. If the guides’ believe the tourists’ set their expectations in relations to landmarks like

these, no wonder they fear the tourists are in for a disappointment, but by and large it appears that the fears are unwarranted, as the student survey and my observations indicate the tourists generally are quite happy with what they get.

The guides address the tourists' cultural presuppositions as an intercultural strategy, either by cultivating or by dismantling their presuppositions. However it is the guides own cultural presuppositions of the tourists' cultural presuppositions, that drive the strategy, and it is hard to know if they address all the tourists in a group, just as they may be wrong in their presuppositions of the tourists presuppositions.

### *Connecting "We" and "They"*

A very widely used strategy is to link the narratives about Denmark to the tourists own culture. Making connections between "We" and "They", the guides are hooking into the tourists' cultural self-perception and create what Cohen (1984: 143) calls "conceptual pegs" that are pronounced links between the tourists' own experience and knowledge and the features of the setting at hand. One Italian speaking guide explained her strategy, when she had to decide which stories to tell at The Museum of National History Frederiksborg Castle,

And then of course I follow the Danish line, but then I look for a leitmotif – the Italian leitmotif, try to find out what interests them (the tourists) historically, that they can match with their own history and world history, and where does Italy enter the picture?

This guide would constantly refer to connections between Italy and Denmark, not only in the castle but throughout the whole tour. The connections were ample, just to mention a few; the Italian Odorico family, who made the mosaics at the square at Amalienborg Castle, the Italian Anna Maria Indrio the architect of the new extension to the National Art Gallery and President Berlusconi's visit to Denmark in 2002. The other way around, she pointed to Danish connections in Italy e.g. by choosing to talk about a large painting at Museum of National History Frederiksborg Castle, that show the Danish King Frederic IVs visit to Venice in 1709 and when we passed the museum of the Danish sculptor Thorvaldsen, who lived and worked in Rome for 41 years (1797-1838), she told the Italian tourists that his works are also to be found in St. Peter's Church.

Most of the guides managed to find some connections to the tourists' national culture, no matter where the tourists came from; for the Australians' we have the Danish Crown Princess Mary who is originally from Tasmania, to the German and the Swiss tourists one guide could say that the Danish sculptor Thorvaldsen had crafted the statue of Schiller placed in Stuttgart, the statue of Gutenberg placed in Mainz and

the monument “The Dying Lion” in Lucerne. For the British tourists the guides’ pointed to an infinity of Danish connections from the Viking attack on the monastery at Lindisfarne (Holy Island) in 793, to Lord Nelsons’ naval attack on Copenhagen in 1801 up until present day collaboration between British and Danish soldiers on mission in Iraq. It is logical that the closer the tourists’ native country is to Denmark, the more connections and the more common history. A Spanish speaking guide said he found it easier to guide Spaniards than Latin Americans, as the Danish and the Spanish cultures are closer and there is more common history than between Denmark and the Latin American countries.

Another way the guides connected the “We” and the “Other” was to make comparisons and translate the Danish culture into familiar terms for the tourists. One way would be to translate the Danish metric system into the British imperial system of weights and measures, the Celcius temperature scale we use in Denmark into the Fahrenheit scale, or to calculate prices and monetary figures into the tourists’ own currency. A second way was to compare directly between countries e.g. by telling that Italy is seven times the size of the territory of Denmark. A third way was to make conceptual comparisons such as the guide who said that the main pedestrian street in Copenhagen “Strøget” is our “Magnificent Mile” a famous shopping boulevard in Chicago, or another guide who said that the Marble church (in Copenhagen) is our little St Peter’s Church. The guides are called cultural mediators or culture brokers, (see Schmidt 79, Holloway 81, Cohen 85, Katz ‘85) and this is very obvious, when they overtly connect “we” and the “other” in the narrative, thus opening windows between the host culture and the tourists’ culture.

### *Culturally fixed points*

At times the guides did more than just connect the “we” and “they”, they managed to find topics that both parties could identify with and that both parties found important, they found what Jensen (2004) calls culturally fixed points. A culturally fixed point assimilates the linking of “we” and “they”, but it has a further dimension, as it has to be identified as an important topic in both cultures, and important topics often arouse strong feelings which can show in hot debates. When the guide managed to find culturally fixed points in their guiding, they were sure to have an eager audience. In the communication between guides and tourists I was able to trace several of such fixed points

Topics that relate to common human experiences can yield fixed points, and the topic “at what age do young people leave home” appears to be such a fixed point in the intercultural meeting between Danish and Italian culture. Several of the Italian speaking guides would at some point manage to weave the topic into a narrative, and the Italian tourists would

almost jump in their seats and show strong emotions, when they heard that young Danes by tradition leave their families around the age of 18 – 21. One Italian speaking guide would link the topic to the narrative about the welfare state and the educational system,

But is not expensive to have children in Denmark, because schools are free and also universities are free.....Then the young ones turn 18 and when studying any type of study recognized by the state, they get subsidized with a salary of a maximum of 600 euro. This shows that a study is a serious work, and this is the reason why most kids go and live by themselves when they are between 18 to 25. To live at home when you are 25 is very rare”

Another Italian speaking guide would connect the topic to a narrative about the royal family. The group was standing at square at Amalienborg Castle and the guide explained about the royal family and she told that Crown Prince Frederic left his parents at the age of 18 to go and live in his own apartment, just like young people do in Denmark.

It is well known that many young Italians remain with their families until late their 20's and some into their 30's, before they leave home to settle with their own family. It is neither unusual that adults even older live with their parents if they have no family of their own. The topic is regularly debated by the Italians, and they discuss causes and effects, strengths and weaknesses of their family structures. The Danes may not focus on, and indentify with the topic as much, but the meeting with a cultural “other”, who represents the complete opposite makes us aware of own culture and standpoints. One of the quoted guides explained the Danish family structure from an economic rationale, but I believe that the majority of young Danes even younger than in their mid 20's would hardly think of it as an option to live at home with their parents, regardless of their economic situation. The other way around very few Danish parents could imagine living with their children at that age still servicing them (a Danish mother of three children speaking). Both guides' narratives created instant reactions and emotions in the groups, some started to laugh, others appeared startled and began to discuss among themselves and one tourist would comment “Yes, but that is Denmark”

Common history can also yield culturally fixed points, and the story about the rescue action of the Danish Jews in October 1943 is such a culturally fixed point for Danes and in particular Jewish tourists. All Jews will know about the topic, and most have strong feelings about it, and as Jews are dispersed all over the world, there may potentially be Jews in any group. On a combined City Sightseeing and Dragør tour (a romantic village at the brink of the Sound) with American tourists, one guide made a stop in Dragør in front of a fishing boat called Elisabeth which has been



used to transport Danish Jews in the Rescue action. The guide made a heroic narrative introducing the Denmark as

the only nation in the world where you had people risking their own lives in order to save the Jewish population

In a moving and somewhat solemn voice, she explained about the rescue action, which was organized by the Danish resistance movement with the help of many ordinary citizens. Around 7,000 Jews were transported to Sweden in fishing boats during the night, and the rescue action saved approximately 95% of the Danish Jewish population, which was outstanding in a period of world history known for Holocaust. The tourists listened attentively with serious facial expressions, and many of them videotaped the whole scene.

The rescue action is a cornerstone in the construction of Danish history during World War II, and is extremely important to the Danish cultural self-perception, at the same it is also an important element in the construction of global Jewish history. However during recent years there has been a period of historical revision in Denmark, where the rescue action has been scrutinized and maybe not everything was as rosy as painted in the history books. Some historians state that some fishermen took large amounts of money in exchange for their “help”. In this case we are not dealing with an outright myth like the one about King Christian X wearing the Jewish star, but about introducing light and shade into a complex piece of Danish history. The guides I observed chose only to tell the very rosy version, and it is probably difficult to dismantle this image, as it potentially may collide with both Danish and Jewish cultural self perception.

The guides are very deliberate in their use of culturally fixed points as an effective intercultural strategy, at the same time they are cautious because they hit a nerve in the tourists’ cultural self-perception. The entertaining, playful and commercial frame of the guided tour could be jeopardized with too much soul searching.

### *Viewing the culture from outside – an ethnographic approach*

While all the guides can draw on the intercultural strategy by addressing what they believe are the tourists’ cultural pre-suppositions, or by connecting the “we” and “they”, or by using cultural fixed points, the guides are completely divided in how they identify their own cultural belonging. The guides either identify themselves with the Danish culture or with a culture outside Denmark. The latter would be very pronounced with some foreign born guides who had been living in Denmark for a



number a years but their construction of “we” and “they”, clearly still identified themselves as members of the cultural community where they were born. Furthermore these guides often identify themselves with the same cultural community as the tourists, which enables the guides to form strong bonds by including the tourists in the “we” construction. An Italian born guide, now living in Denmark, would explain about Danish food traditions, and how the Danes often would have just one dish for dinner mostly served with potatoes and she continued “Remember the Danes eat potatoes like we eat bread in Italy”. Throughout the tour, the guide would interpret Danish culture departing from an Italian self-perception. Talking about the weather and the seasons in Denmark, she started the narrative by pointing to the absence of Venetian blinds, which are used a lot in Italy. She went on

In Denmark they don't use Venetian blinds, because they have little sun. When the sun is there, they make it enter their houses. They hardly use curtains, but they often use candles in the windows to give some of the light they miss especially in the wintertime. Remember Denmark is close to the North Pole and there are few hours of daylight (in the winter time) and the light is very low

This observation about the Danish climate and culture is obviously made by a person who comes from warmer and sunnier skies where you use Venetian blinds to protect yourself from the heat and sunlight. The narrative however does not draw on a national cultural category, but rather on differences between a cultural community close to the North Pole as the guides puts it, and cultural communities in warmer climates. In a Danish self-perception we would hardly associate our country and climate with the North Pole.

The cultural communities an actor can identify her/himself with can be drawn along many lines. Another guide would introduce Copenhagen this way “Copenhagen is a rather calm city in comparison with other big European cities. It is not very numerous, but compared to the rest of the country it is “the big city” with traffic.” The guide then drew a picture of a city without too much life, but explained that the Danes found it busy because they compare it with the rest of Denmark, which he described as very quiet and rather empty, especially at the countryside. This description of Copenhagen and Denmark is made by a person who in his cultural self-perception identifies with a more densely populated country with much larger and busier metropolis, than we have in Denmark.

A third guide would construct a narrative drawing on the cultural differences between the family structures in Denmark and the ones found in Latin countries. The guide said

Now I will talk about the Danes relationship with each other. They are very much individualists if you compare [them] with Argentina, Spain and Mexico”

The guide connected the individuality with subsequent weak family ties and he explained how Danish grandparents might be more busy playing golf than taking care of their grandchildren. He also talked about solitude as a result of these cultural characteristic and said “Here people live alone and spend much more time alone than in Spain and Mexico. The elderly go to rest homes” In this narrative the “we” was a Latin “we”, including the guide and the tourists who came from Argentina, Mexico, Spain and Portugal. The cultural self-perception of the “we” represented a strong sense of the collective with subsequent strong family ties in opposition to a Danish “other” with an individualistic culture and subsequent weak family ties.

In these narratives, the guides have what I call an ethnographic approach to the Danish culture, which is possible for the immigrant who has had time to study the culture of their new homeland over time through the lenses of their native culture. Some of the narratives tend to have a critical edge, which is not surprising, as the description the “other” reflects an actors’ cultural self-perception often hidden as “the right way” to organize life (see Jensen 2004). In the ethnographic narratives, the tourists are often included in the “we” construction, as a consequence they are conveyed a feeling of getting a firsthand insight into the cultural “other” by one of their own. I observed that the ethnographic narratives had a very strong appeal to the tourists, and often they roused the tourists’ curiosity, and made them ask questions.

When the guide is born in the same native country as tourists, it is important how the guide identifies his/her cultural belonging. The tourists conceive the guide as a compatriot, who is now living abroad, and therefore still a part of the same cultural community as the tourists. If the guide does not comply with this conception, it can create considerable curiosity and confusion. This was clearly the case with one guide who was born in the native country of the tourists, which is why her mother tongue was the same as the tourists, and her physical appearance and her body language clearly made the tourists identify her as one of their own ones. However she identified herself as Dane, and consequently said “we” and “us Danes” in her narratives. The tourists appeared puzzled and confused by this compatriot, who had gone native in her second homeland. The guide conducted both a City Sightseeing and a North Zealand trip for the group, and the tourists had ample opportunities to solve the puzzle. The whole day she was under inquisition, as she was approached by the tourists one by one or two by two asking her in details about her life. Although tourists generally ask the guides these kinds of questions, these tourists in particular were trying to understand her identity in relation to themselves. The guide answered the questions

again and again, and repeated a short version of her life story, of where she was born, how she came to Denmark as a very young woman more than 50 years ago, how she had married into a Danish family and now she had children and grandchildren of her own. With this story she interpreted her intercultural position through her social position in the Danish society.

The ability to view a culture from outside is not confined to guides, who identify with a culture outside Denmark. Many guides although identifying themselves with Danish culture have had extensive international experiences, not least through their work as guides. This colours their own view of Denmark, and they are well aware of how Danish culture can be perceived from outside, which they will account for in their narratives. One guide would initiate a narrative about the Danish monarchy this way

For those of you living in countries without this system it might seem strange to you, we have a monarch. It is a woman on top of everything, and she doesn't have any power, but we still need her for a lot of functions

Initiating the narrative with a view on the culture from outside, the guide anticipated how some of the tourists, which in this case came from democratic republics, may be puzzled that a democratic country like Denmark maintains a royal house – a residue from another historical epoch. Then she stressed the fact that the monarch is a woman which addressed the possible collision with more patriarchal cultures. Afterwards she switched position and she departed from a Danish self-perception to explain why “we” Danes after all still need the monarchy.

All guides may view the culture from outside, but when the guide identifies with the same culture as the tourists, they can form strong bonds with the tourists, but at times the guiding can have a more critical edge which may collide with the perception of the guide as an enthusiastic ambassador of the country they represent. Guides who identify themselves with the Danish cultural community are much more likely to apply an ambassadorial approach, as the local who proudly presents his or her own culture

### *Viewing the culture from inside*

Most of the guides I observed had a cultural self-perception rooted within Danish culture. This was the case for all the Danish born as well as some of the foreign born guides. Jensen (2004) stresses how actors in intercultural communication tend to idealize their own culture, and if there is ever an intercultural meeting where both parties agree that one of the parties is supposed to promote their own culture, it must be in the

meeting between guides and tourists. During one city sightseeing tour, a tour manager told me her idea of what it takes to be a good certified guide;

A guide has to be enthusiastic and show that they are proud and they like their country and their cultural heritage more than just giving mere facts. If you do not have these qualities, people fall out. There has to be fervour

This tour manager assumes that guides identify themselves with the culture they present, and she expects guides not only to display a positive bias towards their culture, but also to be enthusiastic. The majority of the guides I observed did exactly this, and they were very conscious that they projected a positive image of Denmark onto the tourists. Many guides have strong positive feelings about the culture they mediate, feelings I believe are further developed through their work. One guide, who conducts guided walking tours along Copenhagen harbour front, explained why she is so enthusiastic about these walking tours.

..(one) who like me finds it fantastic that a small capital like ours can present such a beautiful harbour front, where a lot of things are happening, and what happens is international and of international standards. I am so proud about it

Holloway (81: 385-385) notes that one of the guides many sub-roles can be that of “missionary or ambassador for one’s country” and “many (guides) will develop an almost missionary zeal in their effort to arouse the interest of their passengers”.

An excellent example is the guide who on a City Sightseeing tour accounted for the healthy Danish economy, and accentuated it is as a model economy for others to learn from. The tour took place in 2006, when the Danish economy excelled its on almost all economic parameters, and the guide connected the narrative to the other OECD countries, and she continued

They (at the OECD headquarters) are pointing to Denmark at the moment and saying to France and Germany well look at Denmark. Namely France and Germany unfortunately have a 10% unemployment rate

On the surface it appears as if there is accordance between the tourists’ expectances, and what many guides try to deliver, however acting as a missionary or ambassador is not without implications. The guides’ role is less institutionalized than e.g. the one of a teacher or an actor, and there are no clear guidelines as to what degree a guide should adopt the ambassadorial or missionary sub-roles, just as the reverse there are no guidelines for how critical a guide may be. This opens up for the guides’

own interpretation of their role and subsequent choice of intercultural strategies.

Some of the guides I observed would display an unambiguous positive bias towards all aspect of the Danish culture, but many guides also allowed themselves to be a little critical applying humour, irony and self irony thus downplaying the ambassadorial role. In an intercultural context is worth to mention that irony and self-irony are important ingredients in a Danish cultural self-perception. To illustrate my argument, I will use two guides' narratives of the ever valid topic, the Danish welfare system. Both guides were drawing on a Danish self-perception, but in two different ways. One guide would describe the Danish welfare model, as a fair and just system protecting the poor, and although it is financed by heavy taxes, she stressed that "we" the Danes are happy about our system and for that reasons "we" willingly pay our taxes. The other guide would also explain in a loyal and exhaustive way about the benefits of our universal welfare system, but when he had to explain about the taxes that finance the system, he would lament

..there is only one place to find the money and that is in the taxpayers' pockets. So talking about taxes you name it and we got it. Unfortunately we are the champions of world in respect of taxation

The guide explained in great details about the Danish tax system in an ironic and humorous way, and he did little to hide his point of view. When the coach passed the Ministry of Finance he said

The Ministry of Finance to the right – definitely not very popular

The two narratives although both departing from a Danish cultural self perception, show clearly that cultural identity is not just rooted in national identity, but also in political and social identities. The latter guide played two strategies against each other; the one as ambassador, talking nicely about the welfare benefits, against his personal credibility by appealing to ethos, reflecting on just how many taxes can the state place upon the citizens' shoulders. In order to navigate between the two contrary strategies, he used humour and irony.

The two narratives illustrate well how different the guides interpret their roles, just as the marked differences whether a guide view the culture from outside or inside. The guides discuss their obligations as representatives of Denmark, and one guide would in an interview express her concern that not all her colleagues would project a positive image of the Danish culture onto the tourists. However the guides rarely or never hear their colleagues in action, and the negotiation of the guides' role is first and foremost an issue between the implied actors on the guided tour namely the tourists and the guide. If the tourists are satisfied and happy

with the guide and the guiding, a tour will normally be rated as a success by the employers, no matter how the cultural mediation is performed.

If we take the earlier quote of the tour manager at face value, the tourists ought to be happy when the guides are “enthusiastic and show that they are proud and they like their country”. Generally my observations support the statement, and the guides who applied enthusiastic and ambassadorial strategies often managed to make the tourists apply attentive and participatory tactics to the guiding, which after all are success parameters from a guide’s point of view. However exaggerating the strategies may be counterproductive as one tourist explained about a guide from St. Petersburg

The guide we had in St. Petersburg became tedious after a while  
- repeating the glory of Peter the Great and Catharina the Great  
became boring after a while”(Tourist B interview 5)

Exaggeration is one pitfall, but some guides take it one step further and become outright missionaries and even ethnocentric, not only pointing to the virtues of Danish culture but also addressing deficiencies in the culture of tourists, like in the earlier quote, where the guide pointed to the high unemployment rates in France and Germany. Another guide I observed would do just this, repeatedly emphasizing the virtues of Danish culture addressing deficiencies in the culture of the tourists. In the follow-up interview the guide explained how she saw guiding as a mission;

We are representatives of the country they (the tourists) visit, and we have to give them a good experience and maybe inspiration to change certain things in their own country

This guide was very conscious about her missionary call, and explained how tourists on other tours had expressed gratitude for her instructions. However on the tour I observed, some of the tourists on the back seat performed resistance to her missionary inserts by making critical and ironic remarks, but the guide never became aware of the resistance.

## Conclusion

The frame of the guided tour appears as playful, voluntary and commercial, where the guide as cultural mediator is “an” authority but not “in” authority. The guide cannot demand the tourists to listen, but relies on a number of seductive strategies in order to attract and keep the attention of the tourists and the guides develop their strategies in



accordance with their habitus, in a current process interacting with the tourists.

An important strategy is the intercultural strategy, where the guides play on the cultural suspense between themselves, the tourists and the host culture. The guides address the tourists' preconceptions, they connect "we" and "they", and they use culturally fixed points deliberately to infuse energy in the narratives. Furthermore, the tourists may be presented widely different views of the host culture depending on the guides' own cultural identification and interpretation of own role. The intercultural strategy can be very efficient and successful, by judging the tourists' reactions, but the opposite may also be the case when the tourists find the strategy confusing, exaggerated or too missionary.

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# Tourist Guide Training in Iceland: Student profile, motivation and barriers to participation

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## Introduction

In order to plan education successfully educational institutions and policy makers should be aware of three basic characteristics of adult learners which this study provides: 1) who the students are, 2) what motivates them and 3) what barriers they need to overcome before they engage in adult education. For the purpose of this study the term ‘adult education’ refers to all students 18-75 years of age (Jónasson and Arnardóttir, 1998).

Demand for both tourist guides and tourist guide training institutions has increased in step with an increase in the number of foreign visitors in Iceland. Annual number of visitors doubled in ten years to surpass the half million mark in 2008. At present there are about 1,200 certified tourist guides in the country.

Formal training and certification for tourist guides began in Iceland in 1960 when Ferðaskrifstofa ríkisins, the State-operated travel agency, arranged some lectures for aspiring tourist guides. Between 1965 and 1975 the same travel agency organised some short training courses for new tourist guides. In 1976 the Icelandic parliament introduced a new law on tourism which made Iceland’s tourism board (ITB) responsible for the training of tourist guides. The ITB established the Iceland Tourist Guide School (ITGS) that same year in order to fulfil its legal duty to train tourist guides. The ITB dutifully managed training courses for tourist guides at the Iceland Tourist Guide School until 1991 when Menntaskólinn in Kópavogur (MK), a secondary school for students aged 16-20, provided the ITGS with a new address. As a result the ITGS is a secondary school by definition. However, its entrance requirements are greater than for university. Students must be at least 21 years of age at the start of the course, be fluent in Icelandic and at least one foreign language. Further, they should possess Stúdentspróf – a university entrance certificate.

Today, three institutions in Iceland offer tourist guide training. The Iceland Tourist Guide School (ITGS) which was first to offer special training to prospective tourist guides in 1976, the Iceland School of Tourism (IST) in 2002, and University of Iceland's Continuing Education (EHÍ) in 2008. All schools offer one year full-time evening course starting in September and finishing in May, thus catering to the needs of adult learners, both in terms of hours of instruction and course organization. The ITGS and EHÍ are a part of the formal school system, authorised by the Ministry of Education and Culture, but the IST is a private institution.

## Methodology

An internet survey invitation was sent by e-mail to each student at the Iceland Tourist Guide School in 2004 and 2009. In November 2004 eighty-six percent (38 out of 44 students) responded to the survey, which took place over a three-week period. The survey included twelve key questions and several sub-questions. In June 2009 a near to identical survey was conducted amongst a new set of students. Sixty percent, 14 out of 23 students in the 'general interest' tourist guide training category, responded to the survey which took place over a two week period. The response rate in both surveys was quite high but the number of subjects fairly small. However, the results seem to be representative for the student population because results from the 2004 and the 2009 surveys are fairly consistent. Results in the present paper include aggregate data from both surveys unless specifically stated otherwise.

For purposes of comparison, the research questions in the two e-mail surveys in the present study were somewhat adapted to questions posed in a previous study on adult education in Iceland by Professor Jón Torfi Jónasson at the University of Iceland and Jóhanna Rósa Arnardóttir and took place from April 16th to May 18th 1998. It included 1800 random subjects from the entire country, of which 75% responded to a telephone survey.

## Results

### *Student profile:*

The archetypal student at the Iceland Tourist Guide School is a married, Icelandic-speaking woman living in Reykjavík. In 2004 women were 38% more numerous than men at the ITGS. This is an interesting fact

because research in other countries has shown that men are more likely in general to attend professional courses than women. In 2009 the same number of men and women attended the course.

Most of the students live in and around Reykjavík but 15% live outside the capital area and need to travel to attend class 3-4 times a week. Distance learning is not an option for students at the ITGS who live outside the capital area as it is not offered by the ITGS.

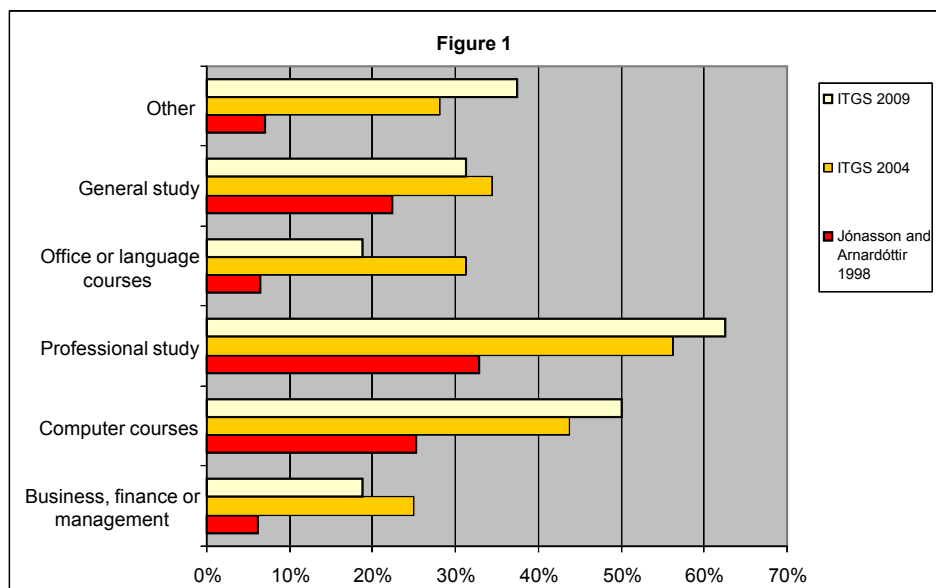
Sixty-three percent of the students are married or cohabiting (Valsson, 2004). This number is rather high compared with 38% in the research findings of Jónasson and Arnardóttir (1998), which notably included more young unattached people.

It is interesting that 21% of the students speak a foreign first language (Valsson, 2004). It seems that well educated immigrants, who sometimes do not find work in their respective fields due to the language barrier, find it attractive to work as a tourist guide in their host country where they are able to capitalise on their language skills.

Students' age distribution at the ITGS was quite even for all age groups in 2004. This fact contradicts the results from Jónasson and Arnardóttir's research, in which it was found that most people engaging in professional advancement or career-change courses are between 25 and 54 years of age. However, the survey result from 2009 agrees with Jónasson and Arnardóttir's findings.

Student's previous education is varied. Fifty-nine percent of the students have a university entrance certificate (stúdentispróf). Further, 33% of the students have trade qualifications, 24% have a work-related certificate and 15% have professional driver's licence. Finally, 15% have a BA degree, 11% a BSc degree, 5% an MA or MS degree, and 4% a PhD.

Students are also likely to have taken part in various short courses during the past 12 months before starting the tourist guide course at the ITGS. The statistics reveal that 10% of respondents to this question (30 out of 54) took part in self-improvement courses, 13% received work-related instruction at work, 20% engaged in formal education, 37% undertook work related study outside of work and 43% spent some time doing leisure-time study.



*Figure 1. Participation in work-related courses.* The darkest bar, at the bottom of each category, refers to the results from Jónasson and Arnardóttir's research (1998), the middle bar refers to the empirical research at the ITGS in 2004, (N=34) and the lightest bar of each category refers to the empirical research at the ITGS in 2009, N=16.

The survey results as can be gleaned from figure 1 show that students at ITGS are much more likely to participate in adult education programmes than the average adult learner in Iceland when compared to Jónasson and Arnardóttir's research results.

#### *Motivation to study:*

Students at the Iceland Tourist Guide School are primarily motivated by their interest in gaining more knowledge about their country of residence. Second, they anticipate starting a new career and are preparing for it. Most of the students at the Iceland Tourist Guide School study out of own interest and thirst for knowledge. More importantly, over 70% of the students are looking to change their career, which is much higher percentage than the national average found in Jónasson and Arnardóttir's study (figure 2).

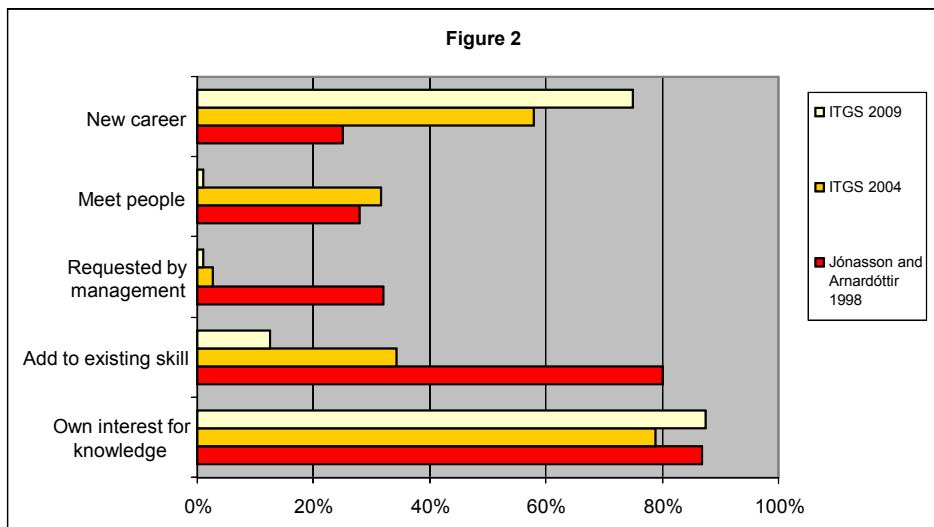


Figure 2. Motivation for engaging in adult education. The darkest bar, at the bottom of each category, refers to the results from Jónasson and Arnardóttir’s research (1998), the middle bar refers to the empirical research at the ITGS in 2004, (N=34) and the lightest bar at the top of each category refers to the empirical research at the ITGS in 2009, N=16.

Figure 2 illustrates that the ITGS course scores very high in the new career category but low in the meet people, requested by management, and add to existing skill categories – compared to Jónasson and Arnardóttir’s research.

The three most important motivational factors that encourage the students at the ITGS to participate in adult education are: 1) previous good experience with adult education, 2) good variety of courses to choose from, 3) knowledge of courses on offer (table 1).

	Motivational factors for participating in adult education	
1.	Previous good experience with adult education	83%
2.	Good variety of courses to choose from	67%
3.	Knowledge of courses on offer	64%
4.	Current job or new job requires it	58%
5.	Time- and lengthwise the courses are just right	57%
6.	Current place of residence does not stop me from participating	54%
7.	Family situation does not stop me from studying	37%
8.	Workload and working hours do not stop me from studying	29%
9.	Attending courses can be managed alongside my job	27%
10.	Study costs are within means	24%
11.	Best place for acquiring expertise	20%

Table 1. Motivational factors influencing students at the ITGS to participating in adult education programmes. 2004, N=34. 2009, N=14.



*Barriers to participation:*

Most of the findings in the present study were predictable. For the most part they mirrored results of adult education studies in the United States (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999), Europe (EAEA, 2006), and in Iceland (Jónasson, and Arnardóttir, 1998) which mention external factors such as money, time and family as some of the greatest barriers to participation in adult education. The predominant barriers according to the present study are indeed: 1) high cost of participating in adult education, 2) lack of time, and 4) would rather want to spend time with family. Interestingly in third place in order of importance – more than a third of the subjects in the two surveys – prefer to find things out for themselves, rather than participating in adult educational programmes.

	<b>Barriers to participation in adult education</b>	
1.	It costs too much	52%
2.	Lack of time	46%
3.	Prefer to find out things for myself	36%
4.	Would rather spend my time with my family	35%
5.	The courses are held during time that I normally work	31%
6.	Sickness or place of residence keeps me away from studying	15%
7.	It is not needed in my job	11%
8.	The courses take too long	11%
9.	Unawareness of courses on offer	6%
10.	Lack of courses on offer	4%
11.	I have had bad experience with courses	2%

*Table 2.* Barrier factors influencing students at the Iceland Tourist Guide School not to participate in adult education in general. 2004, N=34. 2009, N=14.

## Concluding remarks

Limitations in this empirical research at the Iceland Tourist Guide School included technical issues regarding the internet survey. There was a limit to the maximum number of questions that could be asked in 2004, and the computer programme did not offer the possibility to cross-tabulate variables. However, the stated purpose of this research was achieved, namely to identify the characteristics of students studying to become professional tourist guides in Iceland, their motivation to study and barriers to participation in adult education programmes.

Adult education requires time commitment, financial commitment and personal quality-of-life sacrifice by the students. The financial reward of a new career, as is the case for students at the ITGS, seems to be a secondary motivation to study. The course costs €1,400 but 60% of graduates in 2006 made less than €500 during the first six months on the job – which includes the busy summer tourist season. Only one graduate made more than €5,000 during the first six months on the job (Valsson, 2007).

The results of the present study is of great use to educational policy developers, curriculum designers, tourism policy makers, tourism training- and educational institutions, tourism trainers and lecturers. Ministry of Education and Culture in Iceland, an educational policy developer, can use this information as a case in point to support their existing policy on tourist guide education at the ITGS and EHÍ. Both are evening schools supported in part by the State, thus challenging the conventional publicly fully funded domain. The ITGS, EHÍ and IST, curriculum designers and tourism training- and educational institutions, can use this information to further streamline the existing curriculum to better suit the needs of the adult learner. Finally, tourism trainers and lecturers may find this information useful to better understand the students they teach and adapt their training methods accordingly, thus provide their students with even better service.

This study reveals three most important motivational factors influencing the decision of an individual to take part in tourist guide training (adult education) – namely, previous good experience with adult education, good variety of courses to choose from, and knowledge of courses on offer. This study also identifies three most important barriers to adult education participation in general, – namely, lack of time, lack of money and prefer spending time with family.

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## The Mis-Guided Tour and the Standard Tour – a study of contrasting tour-guiding practices in the city of Exeter (UK)

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### Introduction

This paper proposes that certain patterns of discourse can be detected in ‘official’, ‘civic’ contemporary touring-guiding within the city of Exeter (UK), and that these patterns create certain problematical relations with, and problematical representations of, the sites of these tours. As a result, these guided tours (or, generically, the ‘standard’ Exeter tour) miss many of the opportunities afforded by their sites for critical, embodied, revelatory and investigative engagements. The paper develops this critique to suggest that an alternative model might better accept these opportunities and provisionally proposes the practice of ‘mis-guiding’, developed in the city of Exeter, as a constructive move towards such a model. .

What is referred to here by ‘standard’ is a tour led either by amateur Red Coat guides, with a serious, enthusiastic and committed attitude to their tours, or by municipal employees working from a provided text. Although the guides at the city’s Underground Passages hold degrees in Archaeology or related subjects, they use a generic script prepared for them, and to which they can add only marginal remarks and a flavour of their own ‘voice’. There may, of course, be ‘official’ Exeter tours (or moments within them) that differ from the ‘standard’ model proposed here, but all the tours visited conformed to all or most of the principles of the model. Indeed, one of the questions that this paper begs, but does not fully address, is what genealogical or causal lineage, or synchronic ‘machine’ that “unites disparate elements in the material, and transposes the parameters from one formula to another” (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, p.378) is capable of producing such homogeneity.

In detailing the ruling conventions of Exeter’s ‘standard’ guided tour, I will draw from a critique of three tours in the city’s Underground Passages (each time by a different guide, one in 2008 and two in 2009)

and of a number of tours (all 2008-9) led by volunteer Red Coat guides, including 'Exeter Old and New', 'Exeter Catacombs', 'Murder and Mayhem', 'Forgotten Exeter and Tuckers' Hall', 'Forgotten Exeter' (different guide and script) and 'The Medieval Treasures of Exeter' ('Treasures'). In order to give some idea of the emergent pattern of a tour I will illustrate most extensively from the 'Treasures' tour.

I will then move on to argue for an alternative mode of guided tour – a 'mis-guided tour' – one created in an unstable dialogue with the 'standard tour'. This model emerged in the late 1990s from the site-specific performances of artists' collective Wrights & Sites, based in Exeter, but also draws upon critical theory and an orrery of disciplines (and practitioners). I will argue that the 'mis-guided' tour is a potentially better model than the 'standard tour' for seizing opportunities for interpretation offered by multiplicitous sites and that it encourages the development of a new kind of audience: one with a paranoid sensitivity.

## The Standard Tour

So, what are the problems with the 'standard guided tour' model, as practised in the official tours at Exeter, that inhibit it as an investigation and explication of multiplicitous spaces?

It is segmented, incoherent in narrative structure, often evokes the notion of 'mystery' but rarely delivers the revelation it promises, it under-explains, it ignores the significance of the accidental, it immerses its audience in their own preconceptions, it operates and sustains certain reactionary binaries, if it name-checks ideas it rarely goes on to explain them in detail or demonstrate their application, it is insufficiently aware of itself as a performance, it is modest about its own constructedness, and careless of the significance of its routes, gestures and costumes.

A disjointed assemblage of segments characterises these tours. Individual parts of the tours may be consistent with historiographical narratives, but each tour as an entity rarely develops its themes, a consistent interrogation of materials or a coherent narrative plotline. It is often disrupted by the thematic unevenness of its physical route. No sooner has a theme been established than a corner is turned and a new feature trips up the development. Where a guide tries to reiterate previously established themes, they often find themselves fighting a geographical route with a hierarchy of affects at odds with their attempts at coherence.

When an overarching narrative is established it is rarely satisfactorily resolved. This is exceptionally blatant in 'Exeter Old and New': there is no 'New'! Commonly, a narrative is introduced at the beginning of a tour

as a 'way in' for the audience, but decays as the tour progresses. The audience is distracted from this erosion by the segmented procession of themes.

If 'mystery' is mentioned on a tour – usually to capture an audience's attention – its resolution (if it comes at all) disappoints. Some guides hint at the possibility of supernatural or conspiratorial explanations for certain events to add frisson to their commentary, only to laugh such explanations aside later. At the beginning of one tour of the Underground Passages – through the medieval underground passages that once contained pipes for carrying clean water from springs outside the city walls - the guide promises to resolve a "mystery" for us. This turns out to be a simple explanation for the absence of the pipes: stolen by workmen in the 1950s. The evocation of "mystery" betrays the fragmentation of tour narratives and briefly promises to substitute for a coherent historiography (a promise which is quickly broken in the interests of empiricism.).

The 'standard tour' Exeter guide rarely draws attention to their own part in the tour, whether as the performer of an existing script or as the maker and originator of a tour. With the exception of an occasional anecdote about gathering information, or correcting past mistakes, the tour guide is mostly silent about the forces and means of their tour's production, and of their own relation to it. The 'standard tour' is rarely forefronted as the product of numerous decisions, or as a work of personal enquiry, let alone opened up for an examination of its subliminal, structural or ideological influences.

These guides' relations to their site's performativity is problematical. In order to retain their authority, they must take something of the 'authenticity' of their site. The guide, apparently, knows part of (or maybe more than) that which the site 'knows' of itself (that which the site makes explicit). When the guide then proposes themselves to their group as an excessive authority, with more knowledge than they can dispense in the tour's limited time, it is in denial of themselves as a questionable explorer of the site, and of the group as its potential explorers. The guide not only obscures their own research-journey, but places themselves between the site and the group, implying that interpretation is the end rather than part of the ongoing process of sited enquiry.

Sometimes, in order to 'lighten' the material, a guide will make a personal comment, reflection or joke. The content of these interventions ranges from the inappropriate (unintentionally misleading the 'audience'), through the tangential and unrelated, to the effectively allusive. Regardless of their quality, however, these interventions are almost never folded back into the development of the tour's content. At best, they illuminate an empirical moment. They work essentially by

disparity, light-heartedness contrasts with 'heavy' historical content, subjectivity is set against an 'objective' narrative. Very rarely does a guide use the dissonant quality of these asides to show the fabric of the tour as stylistically complex or emotionally ambivalent.

Despite the segmentation of content, there is often a disarming evenness of tone in the presentation of Exeter's 'standard tours'; this does not imply a monotonous delivery, but rather a comforting equanimity: even in a tour titled 'Murder and Mayhem'. Indeed, the superficial style of the same discourse can change very quickly, driven by circumstance: in an increasingly crowded Exeter Guildhall, our guide for 'Exeter Old and New' *literally* huffed and puffed and began to move his arms in slow, exaggeratedly operatic gestures. However, these histrionics were instrumentalist, attracting and retaining our attention for the same evenly toned narrative (our guide's histrionics carried no emotional affect or relevance to the tour's narrative). Very rarely, if at all, does an informality or a heightened, emotional delivery fold back into a *historiography* of high emotions, exorbitant displays, excessive politics or histrionic action. Murder, siege, blitz, social and political mayhem may be name-checked, but, at least in the relative stability of Exeter, the 'standard tour', quickly and comfortingly, restores these to a default level of ordinariness. This is not necessarily a product of conservative guides. Alternative, leftist, community-based and working class historical tours can adopt similar tones. These tones seem to originate in a discourse of "guided tour" rather than in the particular content of these tours. These tones imply a complementary ideological stasis: human nature never changes, and if the past declines into modernity then nostalgia is sufficient compensation. Even when such universality suggests an inconvenient super-connectedness (for example, in the case of globalisation) the default tone suggests that even this is a repetition of former colonial connectivities, more of the same, history as an orderly procession of compartmentalised connectivities, consistent with the segmentation of the tour.

There is one exception to this evenness – issues of gender. The two female guides I walked with both passionately denounced various historic exclusions of women from public life and space. Twice on this subject I was directly addressed as if I was personally part of the history and content of the tour, and in some way responsible for them. These were the only moments on the nine tours referenced for this paper that I was personally and emotionally engaged and felt as if something was at stake in the real time of the tour.

Any Exeter 'standard tour' will convey many atomised facts about the city, while mostly having very little to say *about* those facts or the way in which they construct the meaning of "Exeter". Little is done to



challenge the tour groups' spontaneous 'reading' of the city. Where popular misconceptions are corrected, this is as part of the completing or refining of an existing (but not delineated) dominant narrative, rather than establishing a discourse of the questionable. The 'standard tour', at its worst, is an immersion in its audience's preconceptions, a pleasurable bathing for its participants in the familiarity of their own opinions in an unfamiliar place; it renders the 'other' of both the site and the past (space and time) tamed and adopted. Comfortingly, the visitor discovers that within the unfamiliar there is a narrative that they knew all along.

A publication used in UK schools to teach teenagers the basics of the leisure and tourism industry revealingly sets the following exercise for creating an interpretation of a heritage site: "make your own visit to this place... and list the things visitors would like to know about it." (Ward, 2000, p.112.) Students of tourism are here encouraged to prioritise appetite satisfaction, inserting an anticipated desire: what do the 'audience' *want* to find, what would they *like* to know? Site, history and historiographical narrative are subordinated to reception. In this model, the customer drives the producer; interpretation and guiding become service functions, the content of the tour is a mirroring of consumer demand.

The problems identified above - of segmentation, of lack of reflexivity, of equanimity as an ideological discourse - are not a result of the historiographical shortcomings of the guides, but lie in the nature of a performance which the 'standard tour' seeks to silence and deny. It is a mark of the evolutionary success (and memetic complexity) of the 'standard tour' that any critique of it will struggle to escape the segmented, un-reflexive, list-full and listless qualities of its discourse: its negation requires praxis.

## Examples from the Exeter 'Standard Tour'

The Red Coat guides are volunteers, organised by the local authority: Exeter City Council. Their tours are widely advertised, well attended both by Exonians and visitors to the city and their red blazers are a familiar sight in the centre of the city.

On one level the blazers of the guides are functional, easy to follow in crowded areas. On another, they convey a double-meaning, (at least for UK audiences), associating the guides on the one hand with the famously red-coated entertainers of a popular string of working class UK holiday camps, and, on the other, with the 'red coat' uniform of nineteenth century British infantry, particularly associated with the 93<sup>rd</sup> (Highland) Regiment at the Battle of Balaclava (the "thin red line"): symbols of entertainment and patriotic militarism.

Most Red Coat tours are outdoors, all are free of charge and most last between 90 minutes and two hours. One of the fifteen or so tours in the guides' repertoire is 'The Medieval Treasures of Exeter'. "Treasures" suggests a particularly 'digestible' discourse of history – discrete objects in transit between past and present auras as a sort of exchange of value – but in fact the tour is made up of visits to sites of fortification, sanitary and water facilities, gates, mills, pubs, graveyards and former routes for the collection of urine (once used as an astringent in the cloth-making industry). There are no jewels or silverware. Yet the guide makes no comment on this intriguing re-casting of "treasures"; a (convenient, but 'innocent') lack of awareness of what is communicated by the frames, conventions, discourses, languages, dictions and muted histrionics of tour strategy, another case of the promise of 'mystery' unfulfilled.

Disappointment is built into the 'standard' tours, a symptom of the denial of performativity, evoking the proximity of History, but denying Its presence. In those rare moments when the 'standard tour' accidentally speaks its truth about History, it reveals too much about itself. On the 'Catacomb Tour', the guide was asked if the earthen floor of the Exeter Catacomb had ever been paved. "No," replied the guide, bending to tap the hard-trodden earth surface, "that's real history, that is." Such moments are rare, though such a clumsy essentialism is never far away and, if a performance-based critic is disappointed by the lack of such explicitness, then such disappointment plays an important role in holding back the crowd from the essentialist, irrationalist and a-cultural "Real" that lurks, mostly unspoken, on these tours.

One such disappointment on the 'Treasures' tour occurs when the guide pauses *outside* three sites where treasures, as conventionally understood, are stored. None of these buildings is accessible. Yet nothing is made of our exclusion (a spectral remnant of previous exclusions). Such poignant parallels and contrasts are repeatedly ignored on these tours: on 'Exeter Old and New' the guide points out the medieval tracery on the cathedral exterior, but walks the group past the same tracery patterns, in six large glass artworks by the artist Katayoun Pasban Dowlatshahi, without comment.

As attendees of an Exeter 'standard tour', we are guided by the instructions of our guide and we follow in a co-operative manner. The pleasurable release from responsibility for our trajectory is wedded to our curiosity about the unfolding route. But there is no attempt to use the process of making our way to inform the content of the tour. At each site, after the talk, the guide announces our setting off, at best with some hint of what is to come, and we follow. Between stopping points we are given no role to play, no task to complete. I observed that members of the tour groups rarely looked around them between stopping points,

hardly ever asked questions about a site that had not already been pointed out, and between stopping points often talked to each other or looked at the pavement, waiting to re-engage their enquiry at the next 'historic' punctum. Tour groups were never actively sensitised to the city or given a participative function. This complemented and reinforced the segmentation of the guide's text. It is as if the discourse of history is re-started from its beginning at each stop, almost nothing is carried over. Any reference to a previous site is one of simple comparison. There is no sense of a matrix of meanings with which the group members must struggle, visualise and arrange for themselves, nor any indication of the gaps in the discourse. There are only segments which float in the intervals of the route's traversal.

Consistent with other tours, the 'Treasures' tour communicates engaging and illuminating segments and effective visual moments (showing today's plain stone figures on the Cathedral's West Front brightly decorated with vegetable pigments as in the medieval period), but there is no acknowledgement of the structural or metaphorical web that the guide is weaving, nor the criteria for the selection of the tour's many parts. This is a deeply inscribed and ideologically potent narrative strategy.

Just as nothing on 'Exeter Old and New' acknowledges its denial of a "New" Exeter, so the 'Treasures' tour ignores its subject's connections to, and disconnections from, the quotidian events of the contemporary city. On our tour, the guide seemed insensible to the many ways in which modern Exeter contrasts, transcends, parallels and reproduces aspects and traces of its medieval past. As the audience stood listening to the guide, a young woman begged among passers-by, there was public drunkenness, piles of rubbish on pavements, and two homeless men walked by carrying their worldly belongings in bags on their backs. Yet none of this – some of it with clear parallels to what the guide had described of medieval Exeter – was acknowledged. It was as if we were asked to walk in a protective, transparent tube. When a passer-by loudly and rudely heckled the guide, he feigned not to hear.

This heckle is significant. The heckler – a young man, dressed in dishevelled clothes – shouted, in a local accent: "I don't know why you're bothering - Exeter's crap!" The heckler assumed that the tour expressed the status and prestige of the city, part of a narrative of municipal pride that the heckler clearly felt he had no part in. A moment similar to this occurred during Johan Dahnberg's short tour of the old city of Halmstad for the First International Forum on Guided Tours (2009). A passer-by sarcastically shouted: "Hallelujah! God bless Sweden!" In this case, the heckler perceived the tour as part of a nationalistic narrative. There is nothing neutral in the form of the guided tour. Before guide meets

audience, before a word is spoken or a step taken, there is already a baggage of assumptions about history, identity and politics. Tourist guide Edwin Lerner rather 'blurts out' the post-colonialist subtext of many a 'standard tour' when he declares that "every tour is a conquest in miniature, the invader staking out a new piece of territory for his empire". (Lerner, 2005, p.70). The argument of this paper with regard to the Exeter guides' lack of critical engagement with the sited and performative qualities of their tours is not motivated by a theatre-professional's frustration at any lack of performance skills among the guides, but rather by the facility with which they adopt, magnify and distribute with aplomb this baggage.

Our 'Treasures' guide expressed no overt nationalist agenda, nor even much in the way of a promotion of civic status. He began brightly with "welcome to Exeter!", but later slipped into a narrative of the city's architectural decline, noting the disappearance of key public buildings over the last two centuries and their replacement by structures he regarded as inferior, reminiscing nostalgically about the lost buildings of his childhood. (Antipathy or, at best, indifference to modernism is universal to the sample of tours discussed here. Even the young Passages guide who gave the most impressive and responsive tour of those studied here referred to an impressive modernist building as "that concrete monstrosity".) Thus, through the authority of his personal reminiscence, the 'Treasures' guide evoked a 'lost Exeter', rooting the city's status in the absence of what it was, rather than in what it is. Yet, while his 'authentic' Exeter lies, architecturally and dolefully, in the past, the guide displays precious little empathy with the *people* of that past. Indeed, indifference to the people of the city is a common trait of the Exeter 'standard tour'.

Despite past technological, industrial and commercial pre-eminence (for example, during the seventeenth century Exeter was a very significant commercial and industrial city, among the top five highest producing and most influential cities in the UK) neither the producing masses nor the technologists and intellectuals of Exeter make any appearance in these tours as agents of the city's making. Agency is abandoned to invading armies and regime change. The intellectual life of the city is ignored, while a handful of the county's grandee families – pre-eminently the Drakes and the Raleighs – are discussed. On 'Exeter Old and New', the guide points out the Devon & Exeter Institution as a former home of one of these grandee families, the Courtenays, but he fails to mention that in 1813 the city's intellectuals purchased it as the premises for what would now be called "inter-disciplinary" seminars and lectures (and it is still functioning). Local politicians (mayors, clerical powerbrokers, councillors) are almost universally characterised as self serving, and while this may often have been true, there is little in the way of explanation for the serious work of reform in areas like public housing, sanitation and health. When it comes

to business and commerce otherwise empiricist tours become suddenly mystical; companies, trades, banks and commerce rise and fall without no hint of human agency, only the exigencies of technological change.

The city's majorities figure passively or disconnectedly. Workers are medieval craftsmen, never nineteenth or twentieth century proletarians. The city's rich history of religious and social street mobilisations (see Smith (2004)) goes unremarked. Populations figure as passive sufferers of insanitary conditions (such as the cholera epidemics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century). Even then, the guides often demonstrate a callous indifference to this suffering; speaking a division between us-now/ them-then. The 'Treasures' guide provoked laughter when describing dogs digging up bones in the cathedral burial ground and presented poverty and squalor as a form of exotica: the excrement in the streets, the blood running from the slaughterhouses. He made a joke of the collapse of buildings in the precipitous West Quarter of the city – something which claimed the lives of many poorer families as former merchants' homes declined into slum properties – glossing his comments with an apocryphal story about a couple floating down the river in their bed: "so the story goes". He mentions the bonfires held on the Cathedral Green, but not their anti-Catholic nature. Empathy and controversy are absented, the even tone of the presentation is matched by the highly-moderated nature of the content.

To the locally or culturally informed attendee, unintentional ironies and absences come thick and fast. After describing the arrival of St Boniface in Exeter in 680 the guide says "we had religion from that period", a bizarre comment that betrays a crude denial of local pre-Christian and Roman worship in the city (an exclusion with the echo of a racial tinge). He displays a photographic summer view of a courtyard interior that is richly bathed every year in blue flowers, and yet he shows us this in monochrome, as if emphasising our exclusion from a site still occupied by the ecclesiastical hierarchy. When he refers to the city's medieval Guildhall as "wrapped in plastic" he unknowingly quotes David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*, a TV narrative of a town's spiritual corruption. But none of these ironies is redeployed as an addition to, or interrogator of, the content or the argument of the tour.

Not all of the 'Treasures' guide's manoeuvres were as subtle as those recounted above. He referred to eleventh century Exonians as acting "like true Brits" (smuggling the besieged Queen Githa from the city), missing the irony that the "British" of that period were a minority in the city and were shortly afterwards driven out by the 'Saint-King' Athelstan. When questioned, the guides for both 'Exeter Old and New' and 'Forgotten Exeter' were simply unable to account for the disappearance of the remnants of the pre-Roman Invasion Dumnonii tribe, and when the young Passages



guide repeated the local myth (there is no reliable documentation) of St Sidwella (Christian martyr beheaded with a scythe, a spring appearing where her blood fell) he describes the saint as a “wealthy Saxon heiress”, possibly reproducing a very old appropriation of a “British” pre-Christian religious narrative by a dominant Saxon culture.

Fragmentation of materials, indifference to the tour’s surface narrative, the opposing of old/new, us/them, the reiteration and active finessing of dominant, negative attitudes about civil society, and the absence of ironical self-consciousness are all expressed at a particular and general level of discourse in all the examples of the ‘standard tour’ sampled. The pattern that emerges from these tours is of a coherent, ideological universe that is revealed explicitly only at moments when the empirical and segmented tour ‘breaks down’, when the guide over-interprets, improvises, or responds too enthusiastically to a question. What is present as an absence then makes itself openly known. This outspoken ‘universe’ is relatively coherent: it is anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeois in the sense that it celebrates little of the mercantile, industrial, administrative and dynamic historical city, nothing of its nineteenth century middle-class intellectual hybridisation, nothing of its longstanding connectedness to international commerce in ideas and materials. Instead it celebrates the absence today of the small, pre-modern, conservative ‘county town’ that it never was, of a lost ‘innocence’ it never had to lose (just as the tour of “Forgotten” Exeter reveals one or two often unobserved details, but mostly, *disappointingly* – see above – it overlaps with the repeatedly visited territory of other tours); this nostalgia is delivered with a narrative of medieval craftsmanship, of the post-political, ceremonial guilds, accounts of the visits of royalty and grandees, and of medieval and pseudo-medieval ceremonies (the Lammas glove displayed on the Guildhall, the Sword of Honour touched by the monarch on each royal visit to signify its continuing entrustment to the city). The authentic city is always “past” and change is always loss; on the ‘Old and New’ tour the removal in 1825 of the protective and exclusionary gates around the Cathedral Close are described as a form of vandalism rather than as a democratisation of space or a symptom of an increasingly peaceable city.

The sub-textual narrative of a “lost Exeter”, occasionally speaking itself explicitly, is it itself a supra-text of its own ‘spectacular’ relations, partly in the sense that they are not what they seem to be (materialist, empirical and disconnected), but also in their modern, even postmodern, commerce in images, playing fast and loose with material sites and objective correlatives. They are also ‘spectacular’ in their dynamic circulation of images, floating these free from historical narrative, creating “a pseudo world apart” (Debord, 1995, p.12), “a weltanschauung that has been

actualized, translated into the material realm” (Debord, 1995, p.13); this is a process that conforms to the relations of an economy of ‘spectacle’ as described by Guy Debord: “proclaim(ing) the predominance of appearances... a negation of life that has *invented a visual form for itself.*” (Debord, 1995, p.14)

The apparent modesty and archaism of the ‘standard tour’ neatly hides *and* expresses these relations. It visits material and historic sites, it references them directly and ‘to their face’. However, the spinal narrative of the tour, segmented like vertebrae, is able to switch form for content and content for form, so that what becomes the content of the tour is not the materiality of these sites, but the processes of segmentation and separation themselves, while the form of the tour is a poignant, modest and coherent longing for a (never-existing) coherence (the ‘county town’).

### The Mis-Guided Tour As A Détourned ‘Standard Tour’

It is against the ‘standard tour’ that ‘the mis-guided tour’ is poised to strike, not in a simple confrontation, but as one proposed alternative among many that might emerge in response to the ‘standard’ tour’s dominance. It is certainly a refutation of kinds, but also a détournement (in its manifold senses, including a travesty and revivifying of materials) and as one side of a dialogue. The ‘mis-guided’ tour, then, is not a simple opposition to, dismissal of, or competitor with the ‘standard tour’, but seeks to re-use the parts of the ‘standard tour’ to create one of many possible alternatives.

The idea of a ‘mis-guided tour’ first arose in 1998 when the site-specific artists and performance-makers Wrights & Sites were working in an unusually sensitive heritage, leisure and economic development site in Exeter. The local authority’s initial animosity towards any theatrical or performative representation of this site led to the group’s growing awareness of the monolithic, restrictive and monocular narrating of this and other similarly contested sites in the city by political, commercial and cultural interests (including tour-guiding).

However, the group also began to discuss the ways in which the very multiplicitous nature of space itself, “as always under construction... always in the process of being made... never finished; never closed” (Massey, 2005, p.9), resisted such attempts to restrict its meanings. And not only did it resist the municipal attempts, but also it resisted the group’s own deployments of ‘standard’ (theatre building-based) performance practices. I was at the time, and remain today, a member of this group. As I worked with my colleagues to create a joint response to



this site (and subsequently in similarly disputed and controlled spaces) I became increasingly aware of a rich assembly of traps, convulsions, gaps, aggressions, pitfalls, paradoxes, discomforts and disputes in these multiplicitous spaces and how they were often left unaddressed by official discourse and were uncontainable by the 'standard' theatrical means at our disposal.

I came to realise that I could utilise these volatilities, initially by inventing an unreliable and yet insightful tour guide persona that might speak the double-inauthenticities and double-inhibitions of these sites. This persona might voice, through irony, the external restrictions placed on meaning in such a site, while also acting as a subversive *restriction on that restriction*, thus releasing the volatility of multiplicitous space into the performance. The intention here was that by embodying and voicing a double failure of truth, the "Mis-Guide", as we named this persona, might express an ironical truth, a kind of dislocated, displaced truth that chimed with a tradition of critical theory founded in German idealism, rooted in the idea that the truth of a thing lies outside of itself.

Seeking the means to animate such double-inhibitions, and to save what I could of my own immediate performance practice, I moved away from a drama of character, mimesis and psychology, and adopted the guided tour and the guide persona. These served as a non-theatrical (or "post-dramatic") means by which to engage ironically and personally (and, in a self-defeating way, autobiographically) with the perilous multiplicities of the heritage site, bringing together the fragments (or segments) of a failed theatricality and a restrictive touristic narrative into a new kind of assemblage for the Wrights & Sites performance *Pilot Navigation* (1998). Another member of the group, Cathy Turner, also created her own guide/character for this performance. Where the "Mis-Guide" was poetic and louche, Turner's guide was a bright, uniformed and entertaining commentator who used the fictional narrative of a local painter to encourage the audience (to whom small, empty picture frames were distributed) to re-interpret the familiar landscape as an artificial, painted construction.

In creating these characters for *Pilot Navigation*, Wrights & Sites found that elements of what I have called the 'standard guided tour' - its tics and tricks and qualities, its segmented narratives, its empirical research, its ironies, its recycling of old tropes, its binaries of expert and audience, local and foreign, old and new - could be redeployed and détourned (travestied and transformed) in the form of 'mis-guided' tours.

Wrights & Sites have since made a number of these 'mis-guided' tours, including *The Shed Walk* (2003) for Annabel Other's Shed Summit at Welcombe Barton (UK), *Misguided in Zürich - Mind the MAP* for the 2005 Walk 21 Conference in Zürich and two 'seasons' of tours in Exeter

– *the Lost Tours* (2003) and the *Blue Boy Walks* (2004, for Spacex Gallery). In a curatorial capacity the group have enabled other artists to create such tours, including KagránKollektiv's *Suburban Safari* and Karl Bruckschwaiger's *Die Zonen* (both Vienna, 2007) and Alexander Hana's *Tschou-Tschou* (2008, Fribourg, Switzerland). Some of these tours have been made for heritage sites, others for quotidian spaces; Wrights & Sites' member Simon Persighetti created a tour-performance, *Passage* (2001), for Exeter's Underground Passages and another for his local neighbourhood: *Walking Newtown* (2003). My own 'mis-guided' tours have included those for the UK's National Trust at A la Ronde (2006-9) and Morte Point (2009), for the Chiaia area of Naples (2006) and for events like the Hidden City Festival, (2008, Plymouth, UK). In 'The Gap' (2005) I worked with the mathematician Matthew Watkins to make a tour, for the British Association's Science Festival, to illustrate the geometry and philosophy of the mathematician William Clifford using modern, quotidian spaces such as car parks, stairwells and department stores in the Exeter streets where Clifford had played as a child in the mid-nineteenth century.

I have also introduced a number of other artists to the 'mis-guide' concept, encouraging them in making their own performative-tours. These have included scenographer Anoushka Athique and live artist Katie Etheridge (*Mobile Machinoeki*, 2007) and dancer Rachel Sweeney, movement artist Fumiaki Tanaka and singer Nicola Singh (*Fabulous Walks*, 2008).

In making - and observing others make - 'mis-guided' tours, I have gleaned various tactics that both distinguish the 'mis-guided' from the 'standard tour', but also connect them, sometimes dynamically and sometimes antagonistically. It has been useful to discuss these tactics through the concept of *détournement*, particularly in explaining the double nature of the relationship of 'mis-guided' to 'standard', for the term applies not only to the critique and re-use of the parts of the 'standard tour', but also to the means of constructing the 'mis-guiding' process in general.

"*Détournement*" is the name given to a praxis developed by the Parisian International Lettristes, (who later generated the Situationist International), as part of a strategy, mostly devised in the 1950s, combining a utopian urbanism, ambulatory city exploration and an antipathy to the dominance of the visual and the appropriating gaze of the spectator. Disappointed by the decreasing impact of each successive avant-garde and the creeping conservatism of an aged Surrealism, the International Lettristes developed *détournement* as a tactic for reclaiming the materials of art without capitulating to what they saw as its inextricable complicity in the production of saleable commodities and

an increasingly monstrous spectacle of social relations reduced to the competition between, and exchange of, images.

Examples of *détournement* by International Lettristes and situationists included creating political tracts from popular comics by replacing the text of the speech bubbles with leftist theory. To make maps of ambience they cut up conventional maps of Paris, rearranging only those parts representing the city's most intensely atmospheric spaces. The painter Asgar Jorn, briefly a situationist member, bought up stereotypical landscape paintings from street artists and combined them with his own drips and strokes so that the original images, not quite destroyed, took on a spectral half-life, simultaneously a satire upon and a transfiguration of their banality.

Similarly, the 'mis-guided tour' takes from the 'standard tour'; not in the sense that it plagiarises its content (as a 'pirate' tour might copy the text of a competitor), but rather that it defiles and then transfigures its form. Not surprisingly, given its animosity to spectacle, there is an aspect of disappearance in *détournement*, a certain modesty, a withdrawal of the artist from originality and an indifference to authenticity, and this is expressed, in the 'mis-guided tour', in the undermining of the guide's authoritative role, the eroding of the reliability of the tour's text, and the diminishing of the presence of the 'Mis-Guides' themselves. However this corrosion is not the key to the process. *Détournement* certainly "contains elements of game playing and warfare" (Kaufmann, 2006, p.37) and there is an aggression in the tactic, a negation of its target, but it also practices a dialectical 'negation of the negation' and, so, the tour returns, its form intact but displaced, 'détourned' in the sense of taking a *detour*; in order to transform the problems of the 'standard tour' it is necessary to step critically and satirically to one side of it.

In this way, the 'mis-guided tour' retains the abstracted shell of the 'standard tour' – a route, a guide, a crowd, a progress, a text – and yet transforms its content and intention. This is the key function of *détournement*: "an extreme form of the redistribution of cultural value". (Ford, 2005, p.37)

### *1/ The détournement of segmentation*

An example of this process of *détournement* is the use made in 'mis-guided tours' of the segmented qualities of the 'standard tour'. In the 'standard tour' the arbitrary or utilitarian segmenting of information leads to a mixture of localised coherence and generalised incoherence, inhibiting an audience from a critical engagement with the tour's materials. However, this very problem can be transformed into a cultural 'weapon' for the Mis-Guide. Re-writing the guided tour, anyone familiar

with the use of segmentation in the making of a coherent dramaturgy, for example in the work of theatre artists like Bertolt Brecht or Eugenio Barba, can redeploy the disconnections, interruptions and gaps, deferring the synthesis of the tour's parts, so as to produce an episodic narrative which, on the one hand, signals how it is made up from its various parts and, on the other hand, is sufficiently coherent to make itself open to an audience's questioning.

The following four key tactics can be added to that of the transfiguration of segments, within the praxis of *détournement*:

### *2/ The immersion of the guide*

The Mis-Guide immerses themselves, bodily and autobiographically, in the narrative of the tour. The Mis-Guide does not stand above the materials of the tour, but inserts their body and their biography among them. The Mis-Guide shares with the audience the circumstances of their research and explains the personal significance of the site. In 2008 Simon Persighetti was due to create a 'mis-guided' tour with the Zimbabwean mbira player Chartwell Dutiro as part of *The Fabulous Walks* season, but after a single working day Dutiro was hospitalised with a serious illness. In the tour itself Dutiro became a present absence for the audience, with Persighetti drawing on telephone calls made by Dutiro from his hospital bed, playing his music on a mobile cd player and interweaving Persighetti's own African associations with the Devon route of the tour. At first the effect was to foreground the artist, recruiting the site (partly industrial estate, partly edge of town riverside) to tell his own and his work-partner's story, but as the tour progressed and instrumental engagement with the route receded, so did the autonomy of this autobiography; both the site and then the selves reappearing in a more complex entanglement.

### *3/ Folding back*

A Mis-Guide can make offhand comments just like a 'standard tour' guide – personal reflections, reminiscences, jokes – but rather than delivering them and then forgetting them, the Mis-Guide returns to these apparently arbitrary comments and folds them back into the themes of the tour, helping the Mis-Guide to construct a complex matrix of meanings. Throw-away remarks are later revealed as having a poetic connection with or

making a cryptic allusion to a key theme. Every part of the tour serves the web of the tour. Jokes, mis-speakings, puns, apparent coincidences are all eventually revealed as part of a created pattern. (Though not always possible, the Mis-Guide should attempt to weave extraneous and unexpected events – heckles, dogs running up, etc. – into the thematic web of the tour.) This encourages the audience to adopt a paranoid sensitivity – reading significance into every connection – a tendency to over-explain every detail that counters the dominant under-explanation of the ‘standard tour’ guide style.

Opportunities for this connectedness occur as often in a ‘standard’ as a ‘mis-guided’ tour. On a ‘standard tour’ of the caves at Kent’s Cavern, Torquay (UK, 2003), the guide showed models of various animal skulls found in the Cavern, and then, playfully, produced the ‘skull’ of an alien grey! There was a moment of incongruous humour and then the alien ‘skull’ was quickly put away and forgotten. However, this light hearted jest on the guide’s part could have been used to engage with the myth of alien interference in human prehistory which arises from a reactionary assumption that ‘primitive’ humans were incapable of making the leap to civilisation without the help of ‘superiors’ (a structural myth that has a racist equivalent in the interpretation of ancient African civilisations, such as the Great Zimbabwe, as beyond the capability of ancient black societies and therefore the result of a lost white society.) The alien intervention myth has particular pertinence at Kent’s Cavern for it was here that an inversion (and a structural equivalent) of this myth was challenged when the archaeologist William Pengelly reported the layering of human and animal remains at Kent’s Cavern in a configuration that challenged the timeline of the biblical account of creation. Humanity’s biblical role as Creation’s steward, a myth of *humans* as galactic superiors, was broken. But no such connection, or folding back, was made on the Kent’s Cavern tour.

#### *4/ Respecable and non-respectable*

In my own ‘mis-guided’ tour of the Royal William Yard (2008-9) (an immense nineteenth century Royal Naval stores yard) in the city of Plymouth, UK, I combine respectable and non-respectable information. I cite respected historiographical sources, and academically cogent theories of space and matter. But I also quote from ghost-hunting websites and when addressing the apparently gridded and symmetrical shape of the Yard, introduce what at first seems to be an irrelevant and exotic digression into the “trapezoidal philosophy” of Anton LaVey, the founder of the Church of Satan – a set of ideas that includes the belief that non-symmetrical trapezoidal shapes operate as portals for extreme, chaotic

and irrational forces. I then fold this apparent digression back into the tour as the Yard itself begins to reveal that its apparently symmetrical form actually masks trapezoidal features and I use these to evoke the Yard's more extreme and absurd qualities and histories: the possibly sinister implications of the Yard's designation on a Nazi invasion map, the massive storage of biscuits that once sustained blood-soaked colonial adventures and the bitter irony of my own Uncle Clarence in 1939 being issued tropical kit from the Yard before being sent to the freezing waters of the Orkney Islands, where he died aboard HMS Royal Oak, his ship sunk at anchor in Scapa Flow by a U boat. As I reference the bodies of the dead sailors in the waters of Scapa Flow, including my Uncle's, I refer to my own mortal body, my bones damaged by a fall on the granite of the yard, and with the audience's assistance (shielding me from the eyes of the residents of the flats in the Yard) I remove my trousers and put on white Royal Navy tropical shorts for the final fifteen minutes of the tour – first making myself laughable, and then addressing the most serious and personal content of the tour.

Such assistance from the audience is a key part of the final element.

### *5/ The immersion of the audience*

The audience on a mis-guided tour will eat, drink, carry, sing, assist the guide, be questioned. At the Royal William Yard they listen for the sounds of ghostly cattle, and must choose from bottles labelled 'Mediterranean Sea' or 'North Sea' to water their tot of rum. On a 'mis-guided tour' at A la Ronde – *A Man About The House* (2008) - with Simon Persighetti, the tour group are asked to make their own procession. The intention of these participations is for the audience to become alert to the possible demands about to be made upon them by their guide/s, by the site, by the histories to which they are being introduced – there is an active, ethical role for them. Not only are the participants invited, by the coherence of the tour, to critically and objectively question it, but are encouraged, by the sheer density (and yet coherence) of the fragments, to paranoiacally over-explain it. Theirs is an active, intellectual, experiential and participative spectatorship.

There is an underlying strategy behind the tactics of the 'mis-guided' tour. This is an approach to place and space developed by Wrights & Sites over a series of projects; one that the company have come to call "mythogeography" (see Smith, 2009).

This approach builds upon (and adopts aspects of) some of the common tactics of postmodern performance – self-reflexivity and intertextuality, for example – but it also brings less common, less academically familiar elements, extending the definition of mythogeography as "the personal,



mythical, fictional and fanciful mappings that intertwine or subvert the official, municipal identities and histories of a place” (Wrights & Sites, 2010) to embrace discourses, in my own work, such as that of the work of Charles Fort, an unrespectable enquirer into unexplained phenomena who privileged anomaly over conformity as the criterion for assessing data. In the ‘mis-guided’ tour this folds back irrelevance and anomaly as the keys to historiographical enquiry, privileging the marginalised, discarded, degraded, inconvenient and the clues to the yet-to-be-detected, what Fort described as “damned data”.

This enhanced mythogeographic approach has two main features: firstly in opposition to restrictive monolithic conceptions of sites, it sets multiple narratives in motion about any site. Secondly, it empowers and mythologizes people, especially explorers in the city (protean avatars of the tour group), setting their biographies and their sensual presence on an equal footing with the historic forces active upon the sites they engage with, re-conceiving them as agons, heroes, interventionists, re-makers of meaning, détourners, actors in history, rather than the passive receptors of existing meanings.

It is these two mythogeographical missions that the ‘mis-guided’ tour – in association with other walking, interventionist and situational practices – seeks to serve.



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