

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The global tourism landscape is currently undergoing a monumental and fundamental transformation, shifting definitively from a conventional service-based economy toward a highly nuanced "experience economy" (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). In this modern paradigm, the traditional metrics of tourism, characterized by the passive consumption of tangible services and superficial sightseeing, are no longer sufficient to satisfy the contemporary traveler. Modern tourists, frequently conceptualized in sociological literature as "post-tourists," do not merely seek physical destinations; they aggressively pursue emotional engagement, deep psychological immersion, and authentic, transformative encounters capable of generating profound personal value and meaning (Urry & Larsen, 2011; MacCannell, 1976). Tung and Ritchie (2011) define this evolution as the pursuit of the Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE), wherein the cognitive and affective dimensions of a trip resonate long after the journey concludes. This structural shift dictates that modern tourism destinations must transcend the mere provision of stunning physical landscapes; they must guarantee a meticulously orchestrated, seamless, and emotionally resonant journey.

Within this highly complex experience architecture, the tour guide occupies a critically indispensable position. Historically viewed as mere pathfinders or basic cultural storytellers (Cohen, 1985), the expectations placed upon tour guides have drastically evolved. In contemporary tourism, particularly within extreme,

unpredictable, and logistically challenging environments, the guide can no longer operate as a passive logistical navigator. Instead, modern literature dictates that the guide must act as the primary "Experience Choreographer" or "Experience Creator" (Weiler & Black, 2015; Sitohang, 2024). They are the frontline orchestrators of logistics, physical settings, group dynamics, and, most importantly, the emotional states of the tourists. The guide acts as the vital bridge mediating the intense interaction between a fragile human tourist and an overwhelming physical environment.

Taman Nasional Bromo Tengger Semeru (TNBTS) represents an ideal, albeit highly volatile and high-stakes, laboratory to examine these complex dynamics. Recognized globally as one of Indonesia's premier natural attractions, TNBTS is simultaneously characterized by its severe physical extremes and daunting logistical challenges. Tourists face sub-zero temperatures, dense and hazardous jeep traffic jams on the caldera's Sea of Sand, highly constrained time windows for the Pananjakan sunrise viewing, and the omnipresent threat of spatial overtourism. Drawing upon the recent analysis by Idwar et al. (2024), it is glaringly evident that TNBTS is a fundamentally fragile ecosystem that demands rigorous, sustainable, and hyper-vigilant micro-management on the ground. This inherent fragility was starkly illuminated by the devastating savanna fire in late 2023, a critical incident that captured international media attention and severely threatened the destination's global reputation. Such crises underscore that the preservation of the park's integrity and the ultimate safety of the tourists do not rely solely on macro-policy, but depend heavily on the rigorous setting management executed by

tour guides on the ground. In this volatile context, the tour guide is a frontline crisis manager. Their immediate logistical decisions such as physically restricting tourists from encroaching on recovering flora, or actively managing tourist anxiety during suffocating jeep bottlenecks that serve as the most active, crucial, and tangible form of experience creation.

Crucially, the necessity of this meticulous orchestration is exceptionally vital for foreign tourists (inbound tourists), who serve as the exclusive unit of analysis for this research. Unlike domestic tourists, who generally possess a higher baseline tolerance for local infrastructural norms, cultural nuances, and tropical climate variations, foreign tourists typically arrive with distinct, globally standardized expectations. Cross-cultural tourism studies emphasize that international visitors demand high levels of professional safety, transparent communication, and strict logistical punctuality (Reisinger & Turner, 2003; Ap & Wong, 2001). When exposed to the severe, unfamiliar, and physically demanding realities of TNBTS, a foreign tourist's psychological comfort and perceived safety rely almost entirely on the perceived competency of their guide. Mixing domestic and foreign tourists within the same analytical scope would inevitably blur the experiential baseline due to varying cultural tolerances for risk and discomfort. Therefore, to maintain rigorous internal validity and precision, this study deliberately isolates foreign tourists to measure how guide facilitation impacts those with the highest demands for professional orchestration.

The paramount importance of a guide's logistical and environmental orchestration in establishing this baseline is strongly supported by recent empirical

studies. Pusparani et al. (2024) demonstrated conclusively that a tour guide's technical knowledge, logistical confidence, and effective interpersonal communication are the primary drivers in mitigating tourist anxiety in unpredictable environments. In an extreme setting like TNBTS, establishing absolute physical and psychological safety is the non-negotiable prerequisite for tourists to access higher-order psychological benefits, such as aesthetic appreciation or cultural learning (Kim et al., 2012). If a guide fails to manage the journey smoothly, it results in cascading logistical failures: missing the narrow sunrise window, exposing unprepared tourists to excessive cold without empathetic intervention, or becoming hopelessly trapped in a chaotic jeep bottleneck. Under such highly stressful conditions, the tourist's emotional state crashes. Consequently, the tourist cannot reach the emotional baseline required to absorb the destination's aesthetic beauty, rendering any traditional cultural storytelling or historical interpretation attempted by the guide completely irrelevant and ineffective.

Despite the critical necessity of this role, a deeply concerning phenomenon frequently observed in the field reveals that a significant portion of tour guides in TNBTS fail to meet these stringent demands. Many guides actively reduce their role to a highly mechanical, uninspired routine that can be aptly termed "checklist tourism." In this flawed operational model, guides treat the complex expedition merely as a sequence of logistical checkpoints then rushing tourists to the Pananjakan sunrise point, taking a mandatory, rushed photograph at the Bromo Crater, and immediately depositing them back at their hotels. These guides operate as mere transporters of bodies rather than curators of human experience. As

Sitohang (2024) asserts, in dynamic destinations, guides must act as empathetic "connectors." When a guide operates purely on a transactional, checklist mentality, the foreign tourist is cognitively and emotionally alienated from the environment, and the potential for a Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) is completely destroyed.

Therefore, there is an urgent and critical need to theoretically reframe the analysis of tour guides in TNBTS. It is necessary to strip away the secondary, traditional focus on cultural storytelling to empirically scrutinize their primary, foundational role as Logistical and Emotional Experience Creators. While previous academic studies have broadly addressed institutional area management (macro-level) or generic tour guide performance, there remains a substantial critical gap in quantitative research that specifically isolates and measures how a guide's logistical, physical, and atmospheric orchestration directly shapes the Memorable Tourist Experience for international visitors in extreme altitudes.

This research exists to fill that specific empirical void. By focusing singularly on the mechanics of experience creation, this study aims to quantitatively measure the direct influence of the tour guide's role on the quality of foreign tourists' experiences. Furthermore, it will provide robust empirical validation for governing bodies such as Balai Besar TNBTS (BBTNBTS) and the Indonesian Tour Guide Association (HPI) to formulate modernized competency standards that prioritize rigorous setting management, logistical mastery, and psychological facilitation in extreme environments.

1.2 Problem Formulation

Based on the background and the identified gaps outlined above, this research employs a focused regression model to test the specific logistical, physical, and atmospheric facilitation role of the tour guide. Consequently, the problem formulation is distilled into the following specific research question:

Is there a significant influence of the Tour Guide's Role as an Experience Facilitator (Experience Creator) on the quality of the Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) of foreign tourists in Taman Nasional Bromo Tengger Semeru (TNBTS)?

1.3 Research Objectives

Aligned strictly with the problem formulation, the specific and operational objective of this research is:

To empirically test and analyze the significance of the influence of the Tour Guide's Role as an Experience Facilitator (Experience Creator) on the quality of the Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) of foreign tourists in Taman Nasional Bromo Tengger Semeru (TNBTS).

1.4 Research Significance

This research is expected to provide substantial theoretical contributions to academic literature as well as actionable, practical benefits for key stakeholders in the tourism industry:

1.4.1 Theoretical Significance

- A. Expanding Tourism Literature: This study significantly enriches the literature in tourism management, particularly in the sub-fields of tour

guiding studies, tourism sociology, and visitor experience management in nature-based tourism.

- B. Empirical Validation of the "Experience Creator" Role: It provides quantitative, empirical validation for the specific dimensions of the tour guide as an "Experience Creator" within high-altitude, logistically challenging, and fragile national park destinations, moving beyond the traditional "storyteller" paradigm.
- C. Foundation for Competency Modeling: It serves as a robust theoretical foundation for the development of a modern, data-driven competency model for tour guides. This model heavily emphasizes logistical mastery, psychological facilitation, and risk management, which are highly relevant to the demands of post-modern tourism in extreme environments.
- D. Future Academic Reference: It establishes a solid academic reference point for future researchers seeking to delve into the complex dynamics of host-guest interactions, specifically regarding how frontline staff mitigate tourist anxiety and foster sustainable tourism behavior during environmental crises.

1.4.2 Practical Significance

- A. For Balai Besar Taman Nasional Bromo Tengger Semeru (BBTNBTS): Provides data-driven, strategic recommendations for the refinement of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and park regulations. The findings will help BBTNBTS emphasize stringent setting management, improved

tourist safety protocols, and crowd-control mechanisms integrated with guide licensing requirements.

- B. For the Indonesian Tour Guide Association (HPI): Serves as an urgent reference for redesigning advanced guiding training curricula. HPI can shift focus toward "Experience Design," incorporating training in service psychology, emotional flow management, and crisis communication during technical or weather-related hurdles, rather than relying solely on historical memorization.
- C. For Local Tour Guides in TNBTS: Provides direct insight into the critical economic and professional importance of their logistical and emotional facilitation roles. It demonstrates that active orchestration and empathetic engagement have the potential to significantly increase guest satisfaction, leading to higher professional appreciation and economic yield.
- D. For the Broader Tourism Industry and Travel Agents: Encourages the structural creation of premium, high-value tour packages that sell not just physical scenery, but a seamlessly orchestrated, safe, and deeply resonant psychological journey, perfectly aligning with the national shift toward quality over quantity in tourism.