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# Assessment of Tour Guiding Communication Competencies Among Tourism Management Students of Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology

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**ABSTRACT:** This study assessed the tour guiding communication competencies among Tourism Management students of the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST). Specifically, the research evaluated students' competencies in terms of verbal communication skills, non-verbal communication skills, clarity and organization of tour commentary, audience engagement and interaction, and confidence and delivery. The study employed a descriptive quantitative research design using a structured survey questionnaire administered to 116 Tourism Management students enrolled during the academic year 2025–2026. Respondents were selected through purposive sampling based on their participation in tour guiding courses and activities. Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and ranking. Findings revealed that the majority of respondents were aged 19–21 years, predominantly female, and mostly third-year students. Among the communication competency dimensions, Clarity and Organization of Tour Commentary obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.59, interpreted as Strongly Agree, indicating that students are capable of presenting information logically and coherently. Verbal Communication Skills also received a Strongly Agree rating with a weighted mean of 3.50. Meanwhile, Non-Verbal Communication Skills, Audience Engagement and Interaction, and Confidence and Delivery were rated Agree, suggesting areas for further improvement. The study concluded that Tourism Management students possess strong foundational communication competencies necessary for effective tour guiding; however, additional practical exposure, confidence-building activities, and communication enhancement programs are necessary to further develop their professional readiness as future tourism practitioners and tour guides.

**KEYWORDS:** tour guiding, communication competencies, Tourism Management students, verbal and non-verbal communication, tourism education.

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism is recognized as one of the fastest-growing industries worldwide and continues to play a significant role in economic development, cultural exchange, and employment generation. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, the tourism sector contributes substantially to national economies through income generation, job creation, and the promotion of intercultural understanding among people from diverse backgrounds (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2023). Within this industry, tour guides serve as essential front-line representatives who interpret destinations, communicate historical and cultural information, and facilitate meaningful experiences for tourists. Their responsibilities extend beyond simply providing information, as they also function as educators, facilitators, and mediators between visitors and host communities (Ap & Wong, 2020; Weiler & Black, 2021). The effectiveness of tour guides largely depends on their ability to communicate clearly, confidently, and appropriately with different types of tourists.

Communication competence is considered one of the most important skills required of professional tour guides. Effective communication competencies include the ability to deliver clear explanations, use appropriate language and vocabulary, demonstrate storytelling skills, and apply both verbal and non-verbal communication techniques during interactions with tourists (Huertas, 2021). Studies have shown that communication skills such as clarity of speech, intercultural awareness, audience engagement, and interactive dialogue significantly influence tourists' satisfaction and perceptions of the quality of tour services (Mak, Wong, & Chang, 2022). Tour guides must also possess the ability to manage group dynamics, respond to tourists' inquiries, and adapt their communication styles according to varying situations and cultural backgrounds (Weiler & Black, 2021; Ap & Wong, 2020). These competencies directly affect the overall tour experience and contribute to the image and reputation of tourism destinations.

In the field of tourism education, higher education institutions play a vital role in preparing future tourism professionals by equipping students with technical knowledge and essential interpersonal skills. Tourism Management programs commonly integrate courses related to tour guiding, communication, and customer service to help students develop interpretive and presentation skills necessary in the tourism industry (Çetinkaya &

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Öter, 2021). However, despite these educational efforts, many tourism students still encounter difficulties in delivering organized tour commentaries, expressing ideas fluently, using appropriate vocabulary, and demonstrating confidence during tour guiding activities (Çetinkaya & Öter, 2021; Calinao & Castro, 2023). These challenges may affect their preparedness to perform effectively in actual tourism settings, particularly when interacting with domestic and international tourists.

In the Philippine context, tourism education aims to develop graduates who are globally competitive and capable of meeting the demands of the tourism and hospitality industry. As future tourism professionals, Tourism Management students are expected to possess strong communication competencies that will enable them to provide quality tour guiding services and promote positive tourist experiences (Department of Tourism Philippines, 2023). Assessing the communication competencies of tourism students is therefore necessary to identify their strengths and areas needing improvement. The findings may serve as a basis for curriculum enhancement, training activities, and skill development programs that can strengthen students' communication abilities and professional readiness.

Despite the growing importance of communication competence in tour guiding, limited studies have focused specifically on the assessment of tour guiding communication competencies among Tourism Management students in the Philippines. Most existing studies emphasize tourism operations, customer satisfaction, and destination management, while fewer studies examine the actual communication skills of students preparing for tour guiding roles. Hence, this study seeks to assess the tour guiding communication competencies among Tourism Management students of Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology. Specifically, the study aims to evaluate students' competencies in terms of verbal communication skills, non-verbal communication skills, clarity and organization of tour commentary, audience engagement and interaction, and confidence and delivery. Furthermore, the study intends to identify the most and least demonstrated communication competencies and propose recommendations that may enhance the communication skills and professional preparedness of Tourism Management students.

This study is anchored on the Input–Process–Output (IPO) Model, which explains how specific inputs are transformed through a process to produce desired outputs. The IPO model is commonly used in descriptive research to illustrate the relationship among the variables, procedures, and outcomes of a study. In this research, the input includes the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, and year level, as well as the dimensions of tour guiding communication competencies, namely verbal communication skills, non-verbal communication skills, clarity and organization of tour commentary, audience engagement and interaction, and confidence and delivery. The process involves the administration of survey questionnaires, data collection, and the application of descriptive statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and ranking to analyze the gathered data. The output of the study consists of the assessment of the tour guiding communication competencies of Tourism Management students and the formulation of recommendations and strategies that may enhance their communication skills and readiness to become effective future tour guides and tourism professionals.

Tour guiding is an important component of the tourism industry because tour guides serve as the primary link between tourists and destinations. Their role requires not only the provision of accurate historical, cultural, and environmental information but also the ability to communicate effectively with diverse groups of tourists. Communication competence is therefore a vital skill that influences tourists' understanding, engagement, satisfaction, and overall tour experience (Huertas, 2021; Mak et al., 2022). In tourism education, the development of communication competencies among Tourism Management students is essential in preparing them for future professional responsibilities in the tourism industry. Despite the inclusion of communication-related and tour guiding courses in Tourism Management programs, many students still experience challenges in delivering clear and engaging tour commentaries, using appropriate language, and demonstrating confidence during tour guiding activities (Çetinkaya & Öter, 2021; Calinao & Castro, 2023). These challenges may affect their preparedness and effectiveness as future tourism professionals and tour guides. Consequently, assessing the communication competencies of Tourism Management students is necessary to determine their level of preparedness and identify areas that require improvement.

This study aims to assess the tour guiding communication competencies among Tourism Management students of Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology. Specifically, the study seeks to describe the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, and year level; determine the current level of tour guiding communication competencies of Tourism Management students in terms of verbal communication skills, non-verbal communication skills, clarity and organization of tour commentary, audience engagement and interaction, and confidence and delivery; identify the most and least demonstrated aspects of communication competencies; and propose recommendations that may enhance the tour guiding communication competencies of Tourism Management students.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design, appropriate for investigating and describing the current state of tour guiding communication competencies among Tourism Management students at Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (Creswell, 2021). The research quantified and evaluated specific attributes of respondents, particularly their communication competencies, and presented findings systematically using numerical data.

The study assessed five key dimensions of tour guiding communication competencies: verbal communication skills, non-verbal communication skills, clarity and organization of tour commentary, audience engagement and interaction, and confidence and delivery. A 4-point Likert scale was used to measure the degree of agreement with statements related to each dimension.

### Research Locale

The study was conducted at Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST), Philippines, targeting students enrolled in the Tourism Management program. NEUST provides a comprehensive tourism and hospitality curriculum, including tour guiding courses, making it an ideal site for assessing communication competencies of future tourism professionals.

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**Respondents**

Respondents were Tourism Management students currently enrolled at NEUST for the academic year 2025-2026, selected through purposive sampling based on their participation in tour guiding courses or activities. Demographic variables included age, sex, and year level.

**Research Instrument**

Data were collected using a structured survey questionnaire developed by the researchers:

1. **Section I – Demographic Profile:** age, sex, and year level.
2. **Section II – Tour Guiding Communication Competencies:** items measuring the five dimensions listed above.

Respondents rated each item using a **4-point Likert scale**:

- 4 = Strongly Agree
- 3 = Agree
- 2 = Disagree
- 1 = Strongly Disagree

**Data Collection Procedure**

1. **Permission and Coordination:** Researchers obtained permission from NEUST administration.
2. **Distribution:** Questionnaires administered in-class or online.
3. **Data Gathering:** Respondents completed surveys anonymously.
4. **Collection and Verification:** Completed questionnaires were collected and verified for completeness.

**Statistical Treatment of Data**

Data were analyzed using **descriptive statistics**:

- **Frequency and Percentage:** describe demographics.
- **Weighted Mean:** measure competency levels for each dimension.
- **Ranking:** identify most and least demonstrated competencies.

The 4-point scale was interpreted as:

- 3.50–4.00 = Strongly Agree
- 2.50–3.49 = Agree
- 1.50–2.49 = Disagree
- 1.00–1.49 = Strongly Disagree

**Ethical Considerations**

Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the study purpose. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured, and data were used solely for research purposes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents**

**Table 1.1 Age**

| Age Range | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| 16–18 | 24 | 20.69% |
| 19–21 | 80 | 60.34% |
| 22–24 | 11 | 15.52% |
| 25 and above | 1 | 3.45% |
| **Total** | **116** | **100%** |

Table 1.1 presents the age distribution of the Tourism Management students who participated in the study. The majority of respondents, 80 students or 60.34%, belong to the 19–21 age range. This is followed by 24 students (20.69%) in the 16–18 age group, 11 students (15.52%) in the 22–24 age group, and only 1 student (3.45%) aged 25 and above. These results indicate that the student population is predominantly young adults, primarily within the typical college age range of 19–21 years. This concentration suggests that the findings of the study mainly reflect the communication competencies of students who are in their early years of higher education, which may imply a focus on foundational learning and skill development in tour guiding. The predominance of this age group is consistent with general trends in tourism education, where most students are enrolled immediately after completing secondary education (Çetinkaya & Öter, 2021; Calinao & Castro, 2023). The presence of older students, though minimal, may bring additional maturity and prior experience that could influence communication skills during tour guiding activities.

**Table 1.2 Sex**

| Sex | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 44 | 37.93% |
| Female | 72 | 62.07% |
| **Total** | **116** | **100%** |

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Table 1.2: Sex presents the gender distribution of the respondents. Out of 116 students, 72 (62.07%) are female, while 44 (37.93%) are male. This indicates that the Tourism Management program at NEUST has a higher female enrollment, which is consistent with trends in tourism and hospitality education globally, where female students often outnumber male students (Huertas, 2021). The greater proportion of female students may also influence communication dynamics during tour guiding activities, as previous studies suggest that women often exhibit stronger verbal and interpersonal communication skills, which are essential for effective guiding (Mak, Wong, & Chang, 2022).

**Table 1.3 Year Level**

| Year Level | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| 1st Year | 28 | 24.14% |
| 2nd Year | 32 | 27.59% |
| 3rd Year | 34 | 29.31% |
| 4th Year | 22 | 18.96% |
| **Total** | **116** | **100%** |

Table 1.3: Year Level shows the distribution of respondents across different academic levels. The largest group consists of third-year students, with 34 respondents (29.31%), followed by second-year students with 32 respondents (27.59%), first-year students with 28 respondents (24.14%), and fourth-year students with 22 respondents (18.96%). These results imply that the majority of participants have already completed foundational tourism courses and are likely gaining practical exposure through tour guiding activities. The distribution also indicates that the study captures perspectives from students at various stages of their academic progression, which provides a comprehensive understanding of how communication competencies develop across the years. This aligns with research emphasizing that experiential learning and progressive course exposure enhance students' communication effectiveness and confidence in tour guiding (Çetinkaya & Öter, 2021; Calinao & Castro, 2023).

**Part 2: Tour Guiding Communication Competencies**

**2.1 Clarity and Organization of Tour Commentary**

| Statement | Weighted Mean (WM) | Verbal Interpretation |
|---|---|---|
| I am able to present information in a logical and organized manner. | 3.62 | Strongly Agree |
| I can summarize key points effectively during a tour. | 3.58 | Strongly Agree |
| I am able to transition smoothly between topics when guiding. | 3.54 | Strongly Agree |
| I structure my explanations so the audience can easily follow. | 3.59 | Strongly Agree |
| I make my commentary clear and understandable to listeners. | 3.61 | Strongly Agree |

Students rated highly on all items under this dimension, with weighted means ranging from 3.54 to 3.62, resulting in an overall assessment of Strongly Agree. They are able to present information logically, summarize key points, transition smoothly between topics, structure explanations clearly, and make commentary understandable.

These results indicate that NEUST Tourism Management students are particularly proficient in organizing their tour commentary and presenting information in a coherent manner. Effective structuring enhances tourist comprehension and satisfaction, as tourists can easily follow the narrative of the tour. This aligns with findings from Ap and Wong (2020), who emphasized that clarity in presenting historical and cultural information is crucial in enhancing visitor experiences. The strong performance in this area suggests that students have internalized the importance of planning their presentations and organizing information logically, which is a critical foundation for effective tour guiding.

**2.2 Verbal Communication Skills**

| Statement | Weighted Mean (WM) | Verbal Interpretation |
|---|---|---|
| I speak audibly and clearly when presenting tour information. | 3.54 | Strongly Agree |
| I use appropriate language and vocabulary for the audience. | 3.50 | Strongly Agree |
| I try to maintain an engaging tone during the tour. | 3.48 | Agree |
| I adjust my speech pace and volume to suit the audience. | 3.47 | Agree |
| I pronounce words clearly so that tourists understand. | 3.49 | Agree |

Weighted means ranged from 3.47 to 3.54, leading to an overall rating of Strongly Agree, making it the second most demonstrated competency. Students can speak audibly, use appropriate language, maintain an engaging tone, and pronounce words clearly, though slight improvements are needed in speech pace and tone adjustment.

This indicates that verbal communication skills among students are generally strong, allowing them to articulate ideas and convey information effectively during tours. However, minor gaps in adjusting tone and pace suggest that students could benefit from additional practice in dynamic audience settings. Huertas (2021) notes that verbal communication is a core aspect of tour guiding, as the ability to maintain attention and ensure comprehension directly affects tourists' experiences. This competency supports overall tour effectiveness but requires ongoing refinement through practical exercises and simulated tours.

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**2.3 Non-Verbal Communication Skills**

| Statement | Weighted Mean (WM) | Verbal Interpretation |
|---|---|---|
| I use gestures to support my explanations when possible. | 3.41 | Agree |
| I maintain some eye contact with the audience. | 3.39 | Agree |
| My facial expressions are generally appropriate to the commentary. | 3.38 | Agree |
| I maintain professional posture and body language while guiding. | 3.36 | Agree |
| I use non-verbal cues to emphasize important points. | 3.35 | Agree |

Weighted means range from 3.35 to 3.41, corresponding to Agree. Students use gestures, maintain eye contact, demonstrate appropriate facial expressions, maintain professional posture, and employ non-verbal cues to emphasize points.

Non-verbal communication is moderately demonstrated, indicating room for improvement. While students show awareness of gestures and posture, consistent and purposeful non-verbal delivery can further enhance engagement and comprehension. Non-verbal cues, such as eye contact and expressive gestures, reinforce verbal communication and help maintain audience interest (Mak, Wong, & Chang, 2022). The moderate scores suggest that more practical, real-world exposure is needed to integrate verbal and non-verbal skills seamlessly.

**2.4 Audience Engagement and Interaction**

| Statement | Weighted Mean (WM) | Verbal Interpretation |
|---|---|---|
| I encourage tourists to participate and ask questions. | 3.34 | Agree |
| I use interactive activities to engage the audience. | 3.32 | Agree |
| I respond appropriately to audience feedback. | 3.30 | Agree |
| I make efforts to create an inclusive environment. | 3.31 | Agree |
| I sometimes adapt my communication style based on the audience. | 3.33 | Agree |

Weighted means range from 3.30 to 3.34, classified as Agree. Students encourage participation, use interactive activities, respond to feedback, create an inclusive environment, and adapt communication styles to the audience.

Audience engagement is an area that could benefit from targeted development. Although students attempt to involve tourists, the relatively lower scores indicate that interactive and adaptive strategies are not fully optimized. Studies highlight that effective engagement techniques, such as asking questions, facilitating discussions, and incorporating interactive tasks, significantly enhance tourists' satisfaction and the memorability of tours (Huertas, 2021; Mak et al., 2022). These findings imply that practical exercises and guided feedback on engagement strategies are necessary to strengthen this competency.

**2.5 Confidence and Delivery**

| Statement | Weighted Mean (WM) | Verbal Interpretation |
|---|---|---|
| I try to deliver commentary with confidence. | 3.29 | Agree |
| My presentation style is generally professional. | 3.28 | Agree |
| I attempt to manage group dynamics. | 3.27 | Agree |
| I show enthusiasm in delivery when possible. | 3.25 | Agree |
| I maintain composure in unfamiliar situations. | 3.24 | Agree |

Weighted means range from 3.24 to 3.29, representing Agree, making it the least demonstrated competency. Students try to deliver confidently, maintain professionalism, manage group dynamics, show enthusiasm, and stay composed in unfamiliar situations.

Confidence and delivery are critical for effective tour guiding but are relatively underdeveloped among students. Nervousness, lack of assertiveness, or inexperience may hinder smooth presentation and audience connection. Prior research (Çetinkaya & Öter, 2021) emphasizes that repeated practice, peer feedback, and exposure to real-world guiding situations improve self-assurance and professional delivery. This competency's lower ranking indicates a need for interventions such as public speaking workshops, role-playing, and leadership tasks to boost confidence and presentation skills.

**3. ASPECTS OF TOUR GUIDING COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES MOST AND LEAST DEMONSTRATED**

Based on the weighted mean and ranking of each dimension, the study revealed that Clarity and Organization of Tour Commentary is the most demonstrated communication competency among the Tourism Management students, with an overall weighted mean of 3.59 (Strongly Agree). This indicates that students are generally confident in presenting information in a logical and organized manner, summarizing key points, and structuring their commentary so that it is easily understood by tourists. The strong performance in this area suggests that students have internalized the importance of clear and structured communication, which is critical for effective tour guiding.

The second most demonstrated competency is Verbal Communication Skills with an overall weighted mean of 3.50 (Strongly Agree). Students show proficiency in speaking audibly, using appropriate vocabulary, and maintaining an engaging tone, although minor areas such as adjusting speech pace and pronunciation could still benefit from further practice.

Conversely, the least demonstrated competency is Confidence and Delivery, which received a weighted mean of 3.27 (Agree). While students generally attempt to present confidently and maintain professionalism, some may still experience nervousness or lack assertiveness when guiding,

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especially in unfamiliar situations. Similarly, Audience Engagement and Interaction (WM = 3.32) and Non-Verbal Communication Skills (WM = 3.38) were moderately demonstrated, indicating that students could enhance the use of gestures, eye contact, and interactive techniques to foster stronger audience participation and engagement during tours.

Overall, the ranking of competencies from most to least demonstrated is as follows:

1. Clarity and Organization of Tour Commentary – 3.59 – Strongly Agree
2. Verbal Communication Skills – 3.50 – Strongly Agree
3. Non-Verbal Communication Skills – 3.38 – Agree
4. Audience Engagement and Interaction – 3.32 – Agree
5. Confidence and Delivery – 3.27 – Agree

The findings indicate that while students excel in organizing their commentary and delivering clear verbal communication, areas related to non-verbal cues, audience engagement, and confident delivery require additional attention. These results align with prior studies (Çetinkaya & Öter, 2021; Huertas, 2021) emphasizing that practical exposure, rehearsal, and guided feedback are essential in developing well-rounded tour guiding competencies.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the Tourism Management students of Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology demonstrate generally strong tour guiding communication competencies, with particular strengths in Clarity and Organization of Tour Commentary and Verbal Communication Skills. Students are able to present information logically, summarize key points, and communicate effectively in a verbal format.

However, the study also revealed areas that require improvement. Non-Verbal Communication Skills, Audience Engagement and Interaction, and Confidence and Delivery were moderately demonstrated, indicating that students may benefit from additional practice in using gestures, maintaining eye contact, actively engaging tourists, and delivering commentary with greater confidence and professionalism.

Overall, while students possess foundational competencies essential for effective tour guiding, targeted interventions are needed to develop well-rounded communication skills that combine clarity, verbal proficiency, non-verbal expression, audience engagement, and self-assured delivery.

### Recommendations to Enhance Tour Guiding Communication Competencies

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to further strengthen the tour guiding communication competencies of Tourism Management students at NEUST:

1. **Enhanced Practical Training and Simulation Exercises**
   Incorporate more simulated tours, role-playing, and on-site guiding activities that allow students to practice not only verbal communication but also non-verbal cues such as gestures, facial expressions, and posture. Regular practice can boost confidence and help students manage unexpected situations during actual tours.
2. **Workshops on Public Speaking and Storytelling**
   Conduct workshops focused on effective public speaking, narrative techniques, and audience engagement strategies. These sessions should teach students how to maintain audience interest, adjust tone and pace, and deliver clear and engaging commentaries.
3. **Peer and Instructor Feedback Mechanisms**
   Implement structured feedback sessions where peers and instructors evaluate students' performance during tour simulations. Constructive feedback can help students identify strengths, recognize areas for improvement, and develop self-awareness in their communication style.
4. **Integration of Technology in Guiding Practices**
   Encourage the use of multimedia tools, presentations, and interactive platforms to complement tour commentaries. This can enhance audience engagement and provide students with opportunities to experiment with different communication methods.
5. **Confidence-Building Activities**
   Organize activities such as impromptu speaking, group presentations, and leadership tasks that foster self-assurance and composure. These exercises help students build the confidence necessary to perform effectively during real tours.
6. **Curriculum Enhancement**
   Tourism management faculty may consider integrating additional modules or electives focused on interpersonal communication, intercultural communication, and audience engagement to ensure students are well-prepared for professional tour guiding roles.

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