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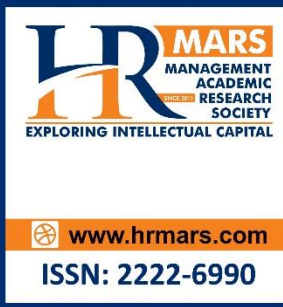
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## An Importance Performance Analysis (IPA) of Tour Guide in Mainland China

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### Abstract

China is opening up its door wider to the world to attract more and more people from all over the world to visit China. Owing to the diverse culture, possessing rich wonderful places with fantastic panoramic view, tourism industry in China is booming at an exponential rate. They are the axis of the whole travel experience and, to some; they are soul of the tourism industry. In certain instances they are considered the 'beautiful angel' who will provide the tourists with an unforgettable experience reflected through China's beauty and hospitality. As the industry grows, so does the demand for capable tour guides. Tour guide is a significant component of tourism industry, and their performance is very crucial in the tourists' satisfaction. The tourist guide service quality is able to directly affect the total tourist's experience. However, tourists are lamenting that the guides are incompetent in their work performance which affect their satisfaction level. Hence, the aim of this study is to assess the influence of tour guide's performance on people's travel experience (and satisfaction) in China's. The importance-performance analysis was used in the context of attributes of tour guide to describe the importance attributes of tour guide according to the consumer expectation and compare with customers satisfaction on these attributes to see whether they are satisfied with the services offered by tour guides in mainland China. Self-administrated questionnaire was developed from IPA instrument and distributed to Chinese tourists and international tourists. The findings of this study are expected to contribute in the improvement of tour guides performance through a standard document for tour guiding competences and training programs.

**Keywords:** Tour Guide, Performance, Importance-Performance Analysis, China Tourism Industry, Tourists' Expectation.

### Introduction

Chinese economy is the second largest in the world. Hence, as one of the world's largest economies, travel and tourism drives cultural exchanges, creates more job opportunities, and boosts the nation's prosperity and stability. According to the WTTC (2018) report on Travel & Tourism Economic Impact China, the tourism and travel industry in China has been steadily developing at an exponential rate. China has rich cultural and natural heritage, including thousands of grand buildings making China as

the most interesting tourism destination in the world. With a long history, China tourism is considered as a traditional and modern industry. Its development directly reflects the rich socio-political history and citizens' life style and standard.

### ***Objective of this Study***

-Tourism in China has greatly expanded over the last few decades since the beginning of reform and liberalization policy. Nowadays, travel has become a popular amongst the society and tour package has become one of the most popular ways to experience China. The popularity of tour package demands a competent tourist guide and plays a crucial role in China's travel and tourism industry because they represent the society. Therefore, providing quality service is one of the most competitive advantages of China's tourism and the tour and travel agencies. Providing a satisfying travel experience by tour guides to customers is not only essential to the business success of a company but also affect the image of the destination. Hence, the objectives of this study are: to identify the importance attributes of tour guide performance and to assess the importance of each attributes of tour guide in customer expectation leading service satisfaction in mainland China

### ***Current Issues in Chinese Tourism Industry***

With the improvement of people's living standard, the requirement for people's travel experiences has changed. It is not only satisfied with the basic travel activities like eating and visiting to popular tourist sites, but also improve tourists' educational experiences, extending from meeting basic demand of travel to more professional and diverse requirements. According to the Xinhua Insight (2017), China is soaring upward to a comprehensive well-off society. Nowadays, tourism has become one of the most popular leisure methods for ordinary families, which is no longer a luxury entertainment. With this latest development, however, comes the conflict between the unsatisfied tourism service quality and rising demand of tourist is increasingly prominent.

One of the challenges of Chinese tourism is to define their target market. At present, the operating mode of "low group fee" in Chinese tourism market is widespread. The travel agencies boast about their low-cost tours in order to attract more tourists, but actually with hidden traps such as forced consumption with exorbitant price tag on certain products and services, as well as bad service quality of tour guide. Misleading prices tag, collusion between tour guides within the business sites to obtain kickbacks is a common phenomenon in China's tourism industry (Global Times, 2016). This has a serious implication on the Chinese tourism destination competitiveness and brand image.

Liang Yi & Bin (2013) say that the current standardization level of tourism technical efficiency is relatively low. The main manifestations are: first, guide fees are priced arbitrarily, particularly popular tourists' sites or scenic spots. Second, services rendered are sub-standards and not uniform. In addition, shortage of knowledgeable and experienced tour guides is effecting the total experience of the tourists. Third, the support for tourism education is insufficient, and the development mechanism is relatively lagging.

## Literature Review

### *The Role of Tour Guide*

Tour guide as a person who directly contact with customers, their responsibility is to facilitate tourist visit and giving the tourists enough information and service. Nguyen (2015) summarized eight key literatures published from 1985 to 2014 focusing on role of tour guide and revealed ten main roles. This includes, tour guide as an interpreter/educator, information giver, leader, motivation of conservation value, social role/catalyst, navigator, cultural broker/mediator, tour & group manager/organizer, public relations/company representative and facilitator of access to non-public areas. Among these roles, the role of interpreter and information giver was widely identified in the most literature. Training programs for tour guide need to focus on the face to face interpretation skills (Yamada, 2011). On the other hand, the roles of leader were second widely acknowledged in the literature.

The leader characteristics of tour guide is providing direction, access, security and safety, as well as maintaining cohesion within the group (Ap & Wong, 2001). The tour guide role as a leader must be competent in organizing tour-related activities (Huang et al. 2010). They are the transmitters who interpret the cultural and natural heritage of the destination to the visitors. Many researchers presented different definitions of tour guide role from tour guide perspective by assuming their own dimensions of tour guide performance. But how do those roles affecting tourist's experience?

### *Service Quality of Tour Guide*

Mak, Wong & Chang (2010) identified six sub-categories of specific factors affecting the service quality of the tour guiding profession in Macau: unhealthy business practices, domination of market, immaturity of tourist market, changing tourist behavior, intense competition between inbound tour operators, and human resource issues. They mention two categories of unhealthy business practice: below –cost tour fare and below cost fee. These are also a prevalent modus operandi in the mainland China tourism industry, sometimes refer to as "zero-dollar" or "zero-fare tour" (Chin, 2018; Yu & McGehee, 2017) or "zero-commission" tours (Zhang, Heung & Yan, 2009) in Chinese tourism industry. This practice has been labelled so as to indicate an inferior quality in China's package tours where tour fares are shared between China's outbound and inbound tour operators (OTOs/ITOs) (Yu & McGehee, 2017). The tour operator use low tour fare even lower than their cost to attract more customers to participate in this group, however in order to recuperating the cost, the tour operator would transfer their economic pressure to tour guide to bring the tourist to visit designated shops forcing them to purchase products and service at a premium price. Rather than concentrating in guiding the tourists, tour guides just need to be good in convincing skill.

Nevertheless, China's National Tourism Administration (CNTA) has placed great importance on the tour guide training and development to improve performance. The performance of the tour guide will determine the service quality and the satisfaction of the tourists. Huang (2010) has studied tour guide performance in China. Employing the Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) he discovered that there are several areas that need serious consideration if China wants to improve the tour guide performance. Wong (2001) surveyed international tourists' satisfaction with services provided by local tour guides in Hong Kong and revealed three satisfying and five unsatisfying

dimensions with regard to the service quality of the tour guides. These three satisfying dimensions are: professional skills, customer relationship/empathy, and communication, while the five unsatisfying dimensions are: shopping/tipping, poor guide conduct, poor itinerary, bad communication, and poor customer relations. In a subsequent study on Hong Kong tour guide's performance, Zhang and Chow (2004) identified 20 service quality attributes in tour guiding. The top six important service quality attributes affecting Mainland Chinese tourists' level of satisfaction included: punctuality, ability to solve problems, knowledge of the destination, honesty and trustworthiness, adequacy of safety regulation brief, and delivery of service promised in the itinerary.

### ***Expectation, Performance and Satisfaction***

Consumer satisfaction is conceptualized as 'a consumer judgment incorporating cognitive and affective evaluations after their use or consumption experience' (Rodríguez del Bosque, San Martín & Collado, 2006). Measuring customers' satisfaction is very important for firms to obtain customers' responses about their service and product. The real value of customers' satisfaction is to identify and analyze the customer's expectations and requirements for the product or service.

In previous marketing literatures, the expectation is analyzed with reference to customers' satisfaction and future behavior (Hsu, 2003; Rodríguez del Bosque et al, 2006). The disparities between customers' expectation and their consumption experience will affect their satisfaction. Thus, understanding the gaps between expectations and performance helps firms to quickly and effectively identify the problem about customer's satisfaction and strategies accordingly to rectify and respond to the issue. Huang, Hsu & Chan (2010) in their research about the role of tour guide on domestic and foreign tourists' satisfaction in China also stated that tour guide performance is one of the most important factors affecting the satisfaction of tourists, especially foreigners, in a package tour. Hoang Le, (2015) investigates the impact of tour guide performance on foreign tourist satisfaction in Vietnam and proposed the positive image of five components of tour guide performance is positively and significantly related to tourist satisfaction which included organizational skill, entertainment introduction skill, appearance, professional competence skill, and solving problems skill.

### ***Importance Performance Analysis (IPA)***

Importance-performance analysis (IPA) was considered in this research in assessing the degree of importance of those competence statements and how does each competence statement effect the level of tourist satisfaction. Importance-performance analysis (IPA) is a widely applied tool for measuring the service quality (Lu & Wu, 2010).

This concept was introduced by Martilla and James (1977). Based on many empirical studies, Martilla and James (1997) suggest that the underlying assumption in IPA enable to indicate the difference between the customer expectation on the importance and judgment on the performance of a specific attribute of the service consumed. The objective is to identify which attributes or its combination gives more impact toward customer satisfaction and leads to the repetitive customer purchase behavior. It is useful information to evaluate competitive position and enable prioritization

of available strategies to enhance customer satisfaction (Ford, Joseph,, & Joseph, 1999; Deng, Kuo, & Chen, 2008).

To implement importance-performance analysis, firstly, we have to clearly determine the attributes of service delivered to the customers (Lu & Wu, 2010). Secondly, these predetermine attributes will be evaluated by customers surrounding two dimensions: (1) the importance of each attributes based on customer's expectation and (2) judgment of its performance. The mean value of each attribute will be calculated based on those feedbacks of customers/tourists and rank its order from high to low categories (Lee, Yen & Tsai, 2008). The mean value of each attribute's importance and performance will be paired and used as coordinates for plotting respective attributes in two dimensional grid (Importance/Performance) that has been divided into four Quadrants as illustrated in Figure1.

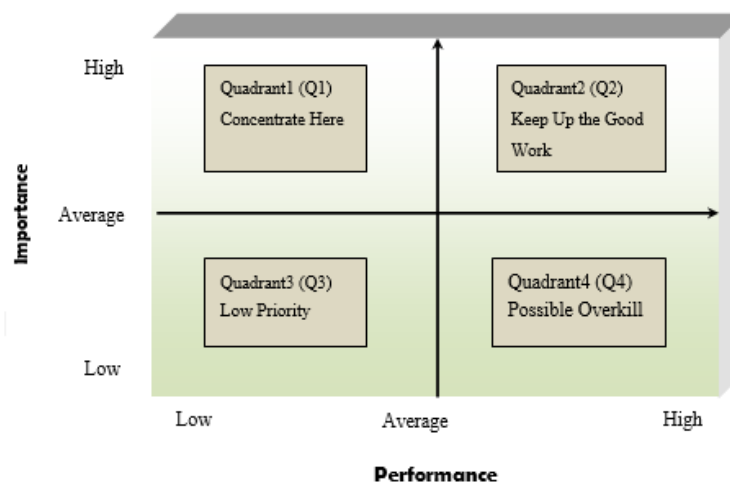


Figure 1: Four Quadrants of IPA matrix

The four Quadrants of IPA postulate different situation with different potential strategy for each Quadrant. The four Quadrants in Figure 1 are labeled 'keep up the good work' (high importance and perform well – need to be exploited further), 'concentrate here' (high importance but did not perform as expected – needs immediate action to improve), 'low priority' (not important but perform as expected – do not waste any efforts and resources) and 'possible overkill' (not importance but perform well – redeploy the efforts to the other attributes that need immediate action). Each Quadrant is divided by the importance of attribute from high to low (in vertical axis) and the performance of attribute from high to low (in horizontal axis). According to the result, the difference between importance and performance can be established (Deng & Pierskalla, 2018). It provides indication that the customer is either satisfied or dissatisfied on the attributes of service consumed. And further utilization of IPA by locating each attribute into appropriate Quadrant in order of its relative importance and performance is used to evaluate a suitable strategy for each attribute (Miranda, Chamorro, & Murillo, 2010).

### **Research Methodology**

In this study quantitative method “positivism paradigm” was employed to assess the importance/performance of tour guide based on tourists’ expectation and their experience. The investigation was carried out from these two dimensions from tourist’ perspective -- one is tourist expectation (how does important that they feel about intrapersonal servability and interpersonal servability of tour guide service quality, and the tourist perception about the tour guide performance based on their experience.

### **Sampling and Data Collection**

Convenience sampling technique was adopted for this study. The sample of this research is tourists who have experiences with Chinese tour guide in mainland China. Survey monkey (online survey) and offline methods were employed to collect the data. Data was collected in Beijing, mainland China with the aid of relevant tour operators or travel agencies like CHINACYTS (CYTS), providing the list of contacts, from May to June 2018. Participants were asked to fill out the questionnaire according to the different degree of expectation and satisfaction with tour guide’s performances based on the identified attributes represented by two (2) main constructs (intrapersonal servability and interpersonal servability).

To improve the respond rate, offline questionnaire paper was also adopted. The questionnaires were handed to tourists and collected by tour guides or staff coordinators from the tour operators at an appropriate time at the end of tour arrangements. In order to avoid any attempt to manipulate the survey process and possibly to reduce the risk of bias in the results, the tour guides were informed that they need not to worry how the tourists’ answers as this will not affect their personal image and/or annual performance assessment. Based on the sample size calculator, the sample size should be 384 to attain a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error (based on Beijing tourists flow in 2016). 600 prospective respondents (based on the travel agencies data-base) were contacted and 320 responded and returned the questionnaires. 300 questionnaires (via the offline method) were distributed and 204 were successfully returned. After the preliminary analysis (data screening) only 363 (this respond rate represents  $\approx$ 5% margin of error) usable questionnaires (40%) were accepted for further analysis (removing missing data and incomplete respondents’ profile). Based on the guideline proposed by Cohen, Kamarck & Mermelstein (1983), the minimum independent group size (each) is 64 to detect a medium size effect at minimum power =.80. The demographic description shows that there are 253 Chinese respondents and 108 are foreigners; indicating the study has sufficient observations.

### **Data Analysis**

First, descriptive analysis was carried to depict the demographic profiles of both the Chinese and foreign English-speaking respondents (see Table 1). Second, Pearson t-tests were conducted to measure the differences of perceived tour guide performance between Chinese and international tourists. Finally, a paired-sample t-test was used to compare the mean of importance and performance data. To construct the importance–performance matrix, the means of the performance and importance ratings of each attribute were calculated. The attributes in Quadrant 1 are high-importance and low-performance and are labeled “Concentrate Here”. The attributes in Quadrant 2

are high-importance and high-performance and are labeled “Keep Up the Good Work”. The attributes in Quadrant 3 are low-importance and low-performance and they are “Low Priority”. The attributes in Quadrant 4 are low-importance and High-performance and are labeled “Possible Overkill”.

### **Findings and Results**

This chapter presents the quantitative research methodology approach to assess the applicability of the proposed conceptual framework. This chapter presents and discusses the quantitative findings that were generated from the questionnaire-based survey which formed the first phase of the research. The survey itself aimed to address tourist satisfaction with tour guide performance in mainland China by dividing the tour guide performance into two attributes which are intrapersonal servability and interpersonal servability.

### **Reliability and Validity**

The result in Table 2 indicates that the correlations of the two dimensions which are intrapersonal servability and interpersonal servability with  $p$ -value 0.000 which means there is 99% evidence to support these two variables was testing in difference areas so this questionnaire was indicated as validity.

According to the rules of thumb of George and Mallery (2003), only the reliability scores equivalent to or below 0.5 are poor and unacceptable. While the score in the range of 0.7 and above is acceptable. The result of reliability on the Intrapersonal servability (3 items) achieved Cronbach’s Alpha value of  $0.951 > 0.70$ , whereas Interpersonal servability dimension of tour guide performance, value of Cronbach’s Alpha is  $0.928 > 0.7$ .

Validity is responsible for testing the research instrument validity. Valid means the instruments is measuring what it supposed to measure. According to Devellis (2012, p.59), bivariate correlation can be employed to establish construct validity. Swank & Mullen (2017) recommend that for interval/ratio variables (and normally distributed- value within  $\pm 3$ ), Pearson’s product-moment correlation can be used to calculate the correlations between two test scores (Minium & King, 2003). There are three (3) considerations when interpreting the bivariate correlations- 1) statistical significance, 2) direction (+ or –), and 3) the strength of the relationship (Swank & Mullen, 2017). If the significant value is  $< 0.05$  (5%), then the instrument is declared as valid otherwise it is invalid (no evidence of convergent validity) if the significant value is  $> 0.05$  (5%).



Table 1: Sample Profile

Demographic variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Nationality</b>		
Chinese	255	70.2
Foreigner	108	29.8
<b>Gender</b>		
male	142	39.1
female	221	60.9
<b>Marital status</b>		
single	173	47.7
married	190	52.3
<b>Age</b>		
<=18	23	6.3
19-29	184	50.7
30-39	80	22.0
40-49	54	14.9
50-59	14	3.9
>=60	8	2.2
<b>Occupation</b>		
business person	39	10.7
civil servant	104	28.7
teacher	56	15.4
clerk/white-collar worker	58	16.0
blue-collar worker	20	5.5
retired	9	2.5
unemployed	77	21.2
<b>Education</b>		
below high school	51	14.0
high school	70	19.3
college/university	189	52.1
college/university postgraduate	53	14.6

Based on the results, significant value obtained (2-tailed) of  $.0000 < 0.05$ , for example, indicating that 'Appearance' was valid. On the other hand, if the value obtained  $r_{xy} > r_{table}$  ( $.098$ ), it can be concluded that 'Appearance' is valid. Table 3 (Pearson Correlation) shows all factors' significant levels are less than  $0.005$  which mean the items are valid measurements except "empathy". Tables 4 and 5 indicate the difference of expectation between Chinese and Foreigners; and the Importance/Performance and perceived quality service. Pearson's correlation analyses also revealed that the scores on the 'intrapersonal servability' had a strong statistically significant relationship with scores ( $r = .806$   $p < 0.05$ ) on the 'interpersonal servability' indicating an evidence of convergence of scores (Cohen, Kamarck & Mermelstein, 1983). Further analysis was conducted to

identify if there are differences in expectations between Chinese and foreigner customers about the attributes of tour guide in China (see Table 4).

Table 2: Pearson Correlation of Intrapersonal servability and Interpersonal servability.

<b>Correlations</b>		Intrapersonal servability	Interpersonal servability
Intrapersonal servability	Pearson Correlation	1	.806**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	363	363
Interpersonal servability	Pearson Correlation	.806**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	363	363

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Based on the demographic description, there are 255 responders are Chinese and 108 participants are foreigner so both the samples (sample size 363) have more than 30 observations means each group has sufficient observations. According to the result of analysis (Table 4), except communication skill, empathy, professional skill and entertainment introduction skill are no difference between Chinese and foreigner customers because the p values are over 0.1 which means there are no evidence to show there is difference between the two groups, these two sample groups have varying degree of variation on expectation on the rest six attributes of Chinese tour guide. The result presented by Table 4. About “appearance”, based on the mean score, Chinese (3.1785) had higher expectation than foreigner (2.8287) with the p-value of 0.003, which is less than 0.01. Therefore, there is an overwhelming evidence to show that there is difference in nationality of appearance expectation with 99% confidence, it can be reported that Chinese has higher expectation on appearance than foreigner. See Table 5 for the aggregate Importance/performance and Perceived Quality.

Table 3: Measurement of Construct Validity

<b>Items</b>	<b>Sig.(2-tailed)</b>	<b>Pearson correlation</b>
Appearance	0.000	0.665
Work attitude	0.006	0.145
Communication skill	0.000	0.371
<i>Empathy</i>	0.251	-0.60
Professional skill	0.000	0.580
Connecting customers	0.000	0.549
Solving problem skill	0.000	0.804
Organization skill	0.000	0.796
Environmental protection skill	0.000	0.773
Entertainment introduction skill	0.000	0.665

About “work attitude”, based on the mean score, Chinese (4.6285) are higher expectation than foreigner (4.4583) with the p-value of 0.001, which is less than 0.01. Therefore, there is an overwhelming evidence to show that there is difference in nationality of work attitude expectation. About “connecting customers”, based on the mean score, Chinese (3.8393) had higher expectation than foreigner (3.6358) with the p-value of 0.1. Therefore, there is weak evidence to show that there is difference in nationality of appearance expectation with 95% confidence, it can be reported that Chinese has higher expectation on “connecting customer” than foreigner. About “solving problem skill”, based on the mean score, Chinese (3.3547) had higher expectation than foreigner (2.8468) with the p-value of 0.001, which is less than 0.01.

Table 4: Difference of expectation on these attributes between Chinese and foreigner customers

Attributes	Sig. (2-tailed)	Chinese mean	Foreigner mean	Rank (overall)
Appearance	0.003	3.1785	2.8287	9
Work attitude	0.001	4.6285	4.4583	8
Communication skill	0.797	4.3083	4.2917	5
<b>Intrapersonal servability</b>	<b>0.001</b>	<b>4.0384</b>	<b>3.8596</b>	-
Empathy	0.526	4.5823	4.5525	10
Professional competence	0.174	3.8485	3.7407	3
Connecting customers	0.100	3.8393	3.6358	7
Solving problem skill	0.001	3.3547	2.9468	6
Organization skill	0.016	3.2490	2.9630	2
Environmental protection skill	0.020	3.2938	2.9290	4
Entertainment introduction skill	0.143	3.1557	3.0093	1
<b>Interpersonal servability</b>	<b>0.020</b>	<b>3.6176</b>	<b>3.3967</b>	-

Therefore, there is an overwhelming evidence to show that there is difference in nationality of solving problem expectation with 99% confidence, it can be reported that Chinese has higher expectation on “solving problem skill” than foreigner. About “organization skill”, based on the mean score, Chinese (3.2490) had higher expectation than foreigner (2.9630) with the p-value of 0.016, which is more than 0.01 but less than 0.05. Therefore, there is a strong evidence to show that there is difference in nationality of appearance expectation with 95% confidence, it can be reported that Chinese has higher expectation on “organization skill” than foreigner. About “environmental protection skill”, based on the mean score, Chinese (3.2938) had higher expectation than foreigner

(2.9290) with the p-value of 0.02, which is more than 0.01 but less than 0.05. Therefore, there is a strong evidence to show that there is difference in nationality of environmental protection skill expectation with 95% confidence, it can be reported that Chinese has higher expectation on environmental protection skill than foreigner. See Table 5 for the aggregate Importance/performance and perceived service quality.

Table 5: Importance/performance and perceived service quality

Attributes	Importance	Performance	Performance minus importance (perceived service quality)	Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ )
Appearance	3.0753	3.0202	-0.0551	
Work attitude	4.5785	3.1143	-1.4642	
<b>Intrapersonal servability</b>	<b>3.9856</b>	<b>3.1054</b>	<b>-0.8802</b>	<b>.951</b>
Empathy	4.5712	2.3214	-2.2498	
Professional competence	3.8154	3.2195	-1.3517	
Connecting customers	3.7787	3.1359	-0.6428	
Solving problem skill	3.2355	3.1384	-0.0971	
Organization skill	3.1667	3.2197	0.053	
Environmental protection skill	3.1846	3.2185	0.0339	
Entertainment introduction skill	3.1157	3.8110	0.6953	
<b>Interpersonal servability</b>	<b>3.5525</b>	<b>3.1521</b>	<b>-0.4004</b>	<b>.928</b>

As the previous literature mentioned, Quadrant 1 indicates the performance of the predetermined attributes at the low level but the level of importance of the attribute is high. Quadrant 2 presents that the performance and desires of customer are both at high, which means the tour guide sufficiently execute the task (attributes) effectively (performance). Quadrant 3 represents the performance and expectation of tourists pertaining to certain attributes that should not be given high priority. The final Quadrant4 illustrates the attributes of tour guide that is not expected of but, the tour guide executes the tasks well.

The output of the Importance/Performance Analysis matrix, as we can see in Figure 2, for the Chinese responses, the Attributes 4 and 2 "empathy" and "work attitudes" respectively was obviously seated in the Quadrant 1 labeled as "concentrate here". The Attribute 3 'communication skill' was clearly seated on Quadrant 2 "Keep up the good work" while the Attribute 5 "professional competence" laid between the margin of Quadrant 2 and Quadrant 4, but since the average score of is evidently higher than the performance, we can considered it to slant more towards Quadrant 2. Attributes 7 and 1 which are "solving problems skill" and "appearance" were located in Quadrant 3—low priority. The Attributes 8, 9 and 10 which are "organization skill", "environmental protection skill" and "entertainment introduction skill" respectively were found at Quadrant 4—possible overkill. The Attribute 6 is "connecting customer" was placed right in the center of the matrix (based on the

average mean) and can be considered belongs to Quadrant 1 which the Attribute 'Concentrate here.' With regards to the two main constructs, intrapersonal servability was seated in Quadrant 1 and interpersonal servability was located on the margin of Quadrant 3 and Quadrant 4.

Secondly, in a separate analysis, the importance-performance analysis was carried out amongst the foreign tourists' responses. Figure 3 indicates the perceived service quality of foreign tourists'. As we can see, for foreigner responses, the Attributes 4, 2 and 3 variables which are "empathy", "work attitudes" and "communication skill" respectively were obviously located in the Quadrant 1 labeled as "concentrate here", while the Attribute 6 "connecting customer" was located in the middle of the matrix which can be considered as an important attribute and the guide performed the task as expected. The Attribute 5 "professional competence" was obviously seated on Quadrant 2 (keep up the good work). Attribute 1 "appearance" was located in Quadrant 3—low priority. The Attributes 7, 8, 9 and 10 which are "solving problems skill", "organization skill", "environmental protection skill" and "entertainment introduction skill" respectively were on Quadrant 4—possible overkill.

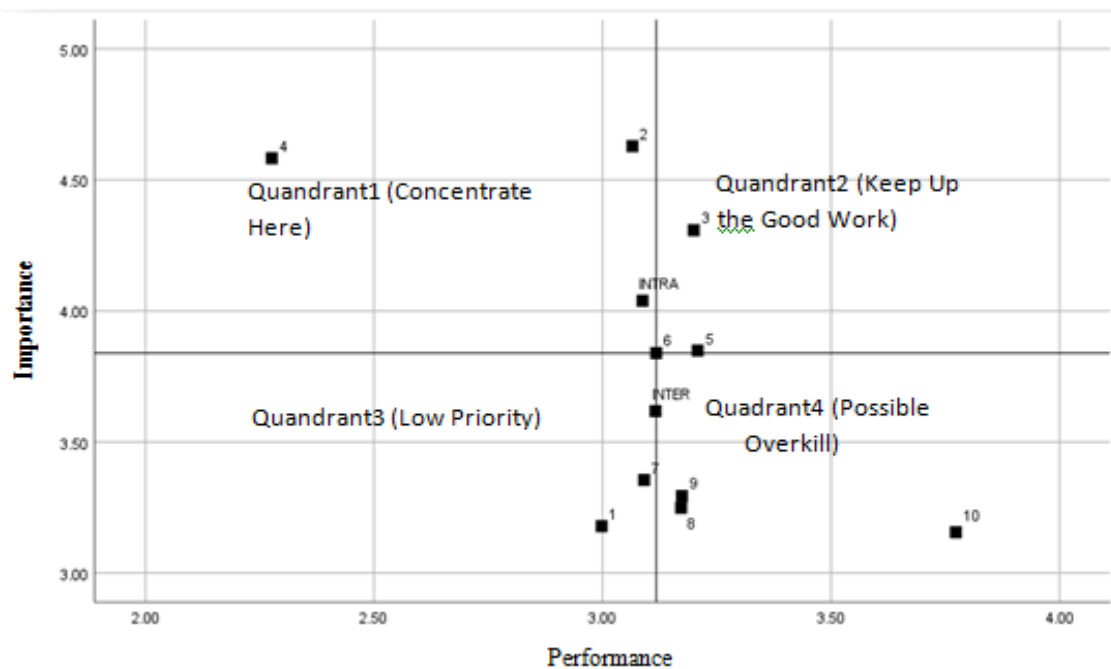


Figure 2: Importance performance analysis of ten predetermined attributes for Chinese tourists' responses

On aggregate, intrapersonal servability was seated in Quadrant 2 which management has to give more attention to develop good personality amongst tour guides. On the other hand, interpersonal servability was considered as 'low priority' and 'possible over kill'. This indicates that the authority has given too much attention on the interpersonal skills rather than the person carrying out the task itself. Comparatively, there are some disparities on several specific attributes, for instant, for foreigner, the Attribute 3 was considered 'low priority, but needs 'concentrate here' for the Chinese. As anticipated, foreign tourists expect the guides to possess good command of English.

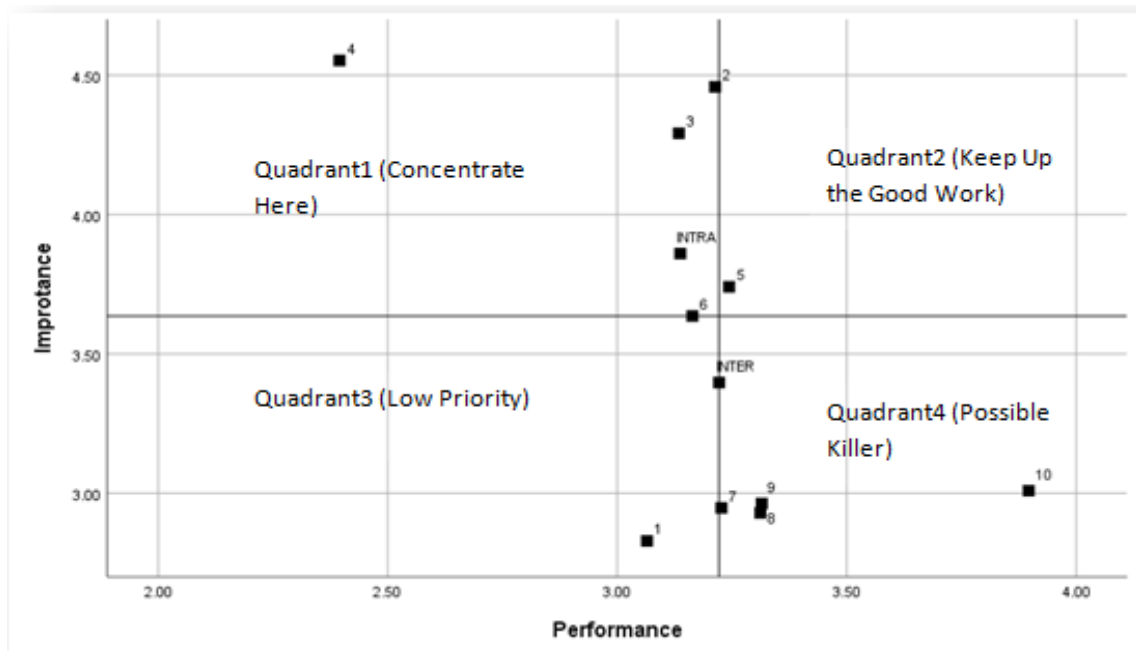


Figure3: Importance performance analysis of ten predetermined attributes for foreign tourists' responses

## Conclusions

In conclusion, knowing the customers' perceived service quality and being able to measure service quality are benefit for management of service quality organization. Through the result of importance performance analysis, the weaknesses and strengths of tour guide service quality were presented so that the manager or other information users could use this information to monitor and maintain improved service quality. In general, the preliminary result of the research showed that the average important score of predetermined attributes of tour guide was comparatively high, indicating by result of total respondents were over moderately important for these attributes proposed by Hoang Le (2015). However, further analyses are needed to distinguish the level of expectation of tourists in terms of their nationality, as well as to understand the different expectation on several attributes between Chinese and foreign tourists in mainland China.

Based on the results, there are some relevant suggestions that could be put forward for the interest of improving China's tour guide behaviors. Tour guide should have the capability to dealing with culturally diverse group of people. Tour guide is bound to occasionally meet with some customers who are uncompromising with tour guides on certain issues and the Attribute 'empathy' is needed in such circumstance (Hanratty, 2016).

Tour guides must act professionally in their performance and tourists considered this as essential in keeping up the China's tourism image. Organization skill, environmental protection skill and entertainment protection skill are three attributes with high performance but low customers' expectations even tour guides have successfully execute these three attributes but they are

indifference to tourists. For Chinese customer, tour guide's communication skill is crucial in providing the service required. Further initiatives needs to be organized to strengthen tour guide's communication skills. In addition, solving problems skill with low expectation for Chinese customers and foreigner customer but their perception of tour guide performance was different, foreign customer have higher perception of tour guide performance on solving problem skill than Chinese.

In this research, using the IPA to assess customers perceived service quality of tour guide was able to present a better picture to the authorities to understand the conception of individual capabilities and the environmental demand —intrapersonal servability and interpersonal servability. The IPA matrix was able to assist the authorities in their strategic initiatives to further strengthen China's competitiveness.

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