

## REASSESSING OCCUPATIONAL LICENSING OF TOUR GUIDES

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### ABSTRACT

It is conventionally held that to protect tourists from incompetent and/or unscrupulous tour guides, governments should require guides to be licensed in order to legally practice their profession. Despite the implementation of such regulatory statutes in many countries, it is argued in this opinion paper that the severe drawbacks of licensing demands should be re-evaluated by both policy-makers and tourism scholars. The licensing of guides is not only an ineffective means of quality assurance, with negative consequences for many of those involved, but it also undermines the ethical foundations of a free society. Furthermore, licensing is an archaic practice for ensuring standardization among the members of a profession in a way that is no longer suitable for addressing the challenges of the tourism industry in the 21st century, in which a wide variety of specialized and innovative guided tours are offered to tourists. Although this commentary presents a firm stand against the compulsory licensing of tour guides, it should be seen as an invitation for open discussion among tourism researchers regarding the necessity of licensing tour guides in particular, and of government tourism regulation in general. Moreover, further research is needed to clarify key points on the issue of the professional licensing of tour guides.

### Keywords

Professional licensing  
Tour guides  
Ethics  
Freedom of occupation  
Freedom of Speech

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## INTRODUCTION

Tour guides are often perceived as fulfilling a crucial function in tourism destinations. Ap and Wong (2001: 551), for example, stated that tour guides are "the essential interface between the host destination and its visitors" and, as such, they bear much of the responsibility for the success of the tour and the overall tourist satisfaction. Moreover, the tourism literature often portrays tour guides as the "ambassadors" of the tour destination, i.e., it is the guides who create and secure a favorable destination image, mediate between local communities and their visitors, and assist tourists to better understand the places they visit, while applying high ethical standards to their practices (Prakash, Chowdhary, & Sunayana, 2010). As part of their job, tour guides reach diverse groups of people, and since they can considerably influence, for better or for worse, the reputation of a tourism destination (Zhang & Chow, 2004), many governments believe that the profession of tour guiding should be tightly regulated. The stated purpose of such governmental regulation is to ensure the quality, professionalism and service standards of those who practice this profession, thereby guaranteeing that the guides project the desirable or "correct" representation of the destination.

A popular mechanism to oversee the guiding profession that has been adopted by many countries or regions is professional licensing (Mak, Wong, & Chang, 2011). Under licensure laws, it is prohibited to work in a certain occupation for compensation without meeting established qualifications and receiving a government permit to legally practice. Overall, the use of licensing often referred to as "the right to practice," as a form of occupational regulation is extensive – and is on the increase – throughout the global workforce (Kleiner, 2011). For example, according to a recent report by The White House (2015) (prepared by the Department of the Treasury, Office of Economic Policy, the Council of Economic Advisers, and the Department of Labor), the share of U.S. workers licensed at the state level has risen fivefold since the 1950s, and today more than one-quarter of U.S. workers require licenses in order to work legally. The main purpose of such occupational licensing is often stated to be the means to ensure the professionalism of those who practice in a given industry and thereby to protect the public interest.

With the stated goal of restricting tour guiding to competent practitioners and hence to protect the consumer, many countries, states and cities around the world require tour guide licensing (Weiler & Black, 2015). In the USA, twenty states and the District of Columbia license tour

guides, with varying conditions for holding credentials—from simply the payment of fees and meeting the minimum age requirements to demands for experience, courses and exams (Carpenter, Knepper, Erickson, & Ross, 2012). In other countries, obtaining a tourist guide license can be quite challenging, often involving meeting a comprehensive set of requirements and considerable investment of resources. For example, to become a licensed tour guide in Israel, the applicant must complete a two-year course at a cost of 24,000 NIS ( $\approx$  \$6,150), spend 84 full days visiting tourist sites all over the country, and pass both written and oral exams; in addition, payment of a biannual fee of 220 NIS ( $\approx$  \$57) to keep the license is required (Rozenberg, 2016a).

For certain occupations, such as lawyers, medical practitioners and accountants, the requirement for professional licensing as a prerequisite to practice is typically seen as simple common sense and thus faces little, if any, opposition. This acceptance of the norm may be viewed as being due to the intimate relations between the practitioners of these occupations and their clients and to the extensive information gap between the parties. However, the proliferation of licensing mandates for other professions, including tour guiding, has been challenged by many critics on several grounds. Taking a public choice theory perspective, Kleiner (2006) noted that occupational licensing has grown and expanded because it serves the interests of both the members of an occupation and government officials. While the former enjoy greater professional status, higher perceived quality of the services they supply, and the restriction of potential competitors, the latter benefit from the political and financial support of both the 'regulated' professionals and the general population that believes that the regulation results in better protection of public health and safety.

Despite the controversy regarding the requirement for licensing in order to practice tour guiding, the tourism academic literature tends to endorse tight regulation of the profession (e.g., Chilembwe & Mweiwa, 2014; Hu & Wall, 2013; Nyahunzvi & Njerekai, 2013), while paying little attention to the ethical aspects of obliging tour guides to obtain the governmental "right to work." Utilizing an extensive interdisciplinary literature review and specific case studies, the current commentary seeks to provide the balance missing in tour guiding research, and to discuss the pitfalls of licensing guides and the consequent injustices. Taking both economic and moral perspectives, it is argued that tour guide licensing is too often promoted as a panacea for problems that arise in tour guiding, and as a way to improve the professional standing of guides, while

ignoring both its harmful practical consequences and the attendant dubious ethical implications.

### **WHY TOUR GUIDES SHOULD NOT BE LICENSED?**

In general, academic tourism literature, state governments and tour guide associations regard the compulsory professional licensing of tour guides as an effective and legitimate mechanism for ensuring the quality of service provided to tourists; to prevent the use of unsuitable guides, and to preserve the tourist's image of the destination (McDonnell, 2001; Pawlicz, 2013; Randall & Rollins 2009). While recognizing that many believe that the licensing of tour guides establishes credibility and standards, this opinion paper presents the opposite view, according to which licensing laws are onerous and morally unsound. Although the emphasis here is on the considerable economic and ethical arguments against the widespread acceptance of licensing as a regulation tool for the tour guide profession, it is acknowledged that supporters of this system would present a different picture and would disagree with the claims presented below and / or the implications derived from them.

#### **Economic Outcomes of Occupational Licensing**

Imposing occupational licensing on a given profession has clear financial benefits for the current license holders. The empirical analysis of Kleiner (2015: 2) reveals that those with licenses "earn higher pay, are more likely to be employed, and have a higher probability of receiving retirement and pension plan offers". Since the licensure process in a particular occupation is almost always organized and controlled by the current licensed members of that occupation, this creates a situation of "regulatory capture," i.e., "the control of a regulatory body by the industry they seek to regulate," as "people already in a profession are in a position to decide who else to let in" (O'Sullivan, 2011, para 11). As explained by economist David Friedman (1989: 44), this creates a government-granted monopoly, in which "the interest of the profession is directly contrary to the interest of the rest of us – in favor of keeping down its numbers instead of expanding them".

Due to the barriers to entry into the profession and the restriction of the available labor supply, licensing results in higher prices for the

licensed services (Kleiner & Krueger, 2013). In some cases, licensing might indeed improve the quality of service for those who can afford it, but for lower-income consumers, increased prices prevent the consumer from making use of that service or – with no other choice – purchasing it in the black market by illegally hiring unlicensed practitioners of the profession in question (Kleiner, 2006). For example, the high costs of hiring a licensed tour guide in Israel (\$225.5 per day for inbound tourism; ≈\$170 per day for domestic tourism) has led to proliferation of unlicensed tour guides who work illegally (between 5,000-6,000, according to the Israel Tour Guides Association) (Rozenberg 2016b, 2016c). Obviously, criminalizing thousands of people for such a victimless felony will result in governmental expenditure on law enforcement and the diverting of budgets from more vital objectives.

Licensing puts at a disadvantage not only lower-income consumers but also wage earners who cannot afford to meet the licensing criteria (which often include irrelevant measures for guaranteeing quality of service or protecting the public interest). As an illustration, Rozenberg (2016c) cites the story of an unlicensed tour guide in Jerusalem who works part-time as a guide to supplement his income. This young man did indeed consider the possibility of attending a certification course for tour guides, as part of the licensing process, but found it too expensive and time demanding for him. He voiced harsh criticism against the blanket licensing requirement for tour guides (para 11):

*Why do I need a license to be a tour guide? What harm is an unlicensed tour guide expected to cause? I know every building and every street here [his neighborhood in Jerusalem]. I did not check if what I do is compatible with the laws of the State of Israel, because I did not think anyone would find fault with the fact that a guy in his 20s would enjoy telling visitors and tourists about the history of Jerusalem and would also benefit from an extra several hundred dollars a month.*

In addition to the financial costs to the individual, professional licensing imposes substantial costs on the economy as a whole. Summers (2007) estimated the total cost of licensing mandates in the USA to be between \$34.8 and \$41.7 billion per year. He also wrote that by curbing competition, licensing decreases the rate of job growth by an average of 20 percent per year. The above-mentioned White House report (2015) found that licensing is a major pitfall in professionals' ability to relocate, as

obtaining license in the chosen destination often requires paying high fees, taking certification courses and reexamination. Decreased geographic mobility may not only have severe consequences for the individual, but it also contributes to a high unemployment rate and inferior job matches and weakens the economy on the whole (Kleiner, 2011).

### **Freedom of Occupation**

One of the earliest condemnations of the practice of restricting an individual's right to select his/her occupation and earn a living as s/he sees fit came from the moral philosopher and economist Adam Smith in his momentous "An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations" ([1776] 1937). According to Smith (1937: 76), freedom of occupation is a fundamental right that is particularly crucial for the disadvantaged:

*The property which every man has in his own labour, as it is the original foundation of all other property, so it is the most sacred and inviolable. The patrimony of a poor man lies in the strength and dexterity of his hands; and to hinder him from employing this strength and dexterity in what manner he thinks proper without injury to his neighbour, is a plain violation of this most sacred property. It is a manifest encroachment upon the just liberty both of the workman, and of those who might be disposed to employ him. As it hinders the one from working at what he thinks proper, so it hinders the others from employing whom they think proper. To judge whether he is fit to be employed, may surely be trusted to the discretion of the employers whose interest it so much concerns. The affected anxiety of the law-giver lest they should employ an improper person, is evidently as impertinent as it is oppressive.*

Similarly, Nobel Prize Laureate in Economics, Milton Friedman, viewed the licensing of occupations as something that is "more than a trivial illustration of the problem of state intervention," but rather "a serious infringement on the freedom of individuals to pursue activities of their own choice" (Friedman, 1962: 142). Freedom of occupation has also been recognized as a fundamental human right by the main intergovernmental organizations such as the UN and the European Union. Adding insult to injury, licensing does not only impede freedom of occupation, but it also discriminates largely against the poor and the less

academically inclined, who ordinarily cannot meet the licensure requirements due to a lack of initial capital.

In this context, let us examine the following case study: Subsequent to the enacting of a law in April 2008 that prohibited guiding tours in Philadelphia's downtown area without a local license, the U.S.-based public interest organization, the Institute for Justice (IJ), challenged this ordinance in court arguing that it violated the right of Philadelphians to earn an honest living. As argued by the IJ (2016) in regard to this case, which was eventually dismissed, as the City announced that it would cease to enforce the tour-guide incensing law (para 23):

*Individuals have a right to be free from unreasonable restrictions on their choice of occupation no matter what that occupation is—be it braiding hair, arranging furniture or giving tours. Every American has the right to pursue his or her vision of the American Dream without facing arbitrary barriers to entry, and the casual trampling of this basic liberty must be stopped—particularly in the very place our liberties were first enshrined in the Constitution.*

The argument that the right to work should be restricted in certain occupations to protect consumers and the public at large from harm is clearly not valid in the case of tour guiding. Unlike practices such as medicine, psychology and the law, tour guides do not typically form intimate relations with their clients. As noted by Shapiro, Campbell & Volokh (2013), tour guides are not exposed to tourists' personal affairs – be they financial, medical or psychological – and mistakes on their part (e.g., providing inaccurate historic details) cannot constitute "ruinous losses for the clients" that could justify government intervention.

### **Quality Control**

As noted earlier, a justification that is frequently raised for imposing professional licensing, and hence compromising freedom of occupation, is the protection of public health and safety. Recognizing the harm caused by professional licensing, The White House (2015: 45) report suggested that licensing rules should be "narrowly tied to the specific public health and safety concerns of the work". Yet, it is difficult to find substantial empirical confirmation of the alleged link between licensing and quality, even regarding occupations that are clearly linked to public health, not to mention those whose potential harm to the public is negligible, such as

tour guiding. For example, Kleiner and Kudrle (2000) found that the tightening of licensing restrictions in dentistry did not result in improved dental health (most probably because there were fewer dentists available), but rather simply resulted in higher prices for basic dental services. Kleiner (2006), in a review of licensure practices, concluded that states that require a government license for a given occupation do not receive fewer consumer complaints than states that do not regulate the same occupation. He thus concluded that the net effects of licensure appear to be negative, with no obvious benefits. Similarly, The White House report (2015) stated that among twelve studies that were reviewed, quality improvement as a result of stricter licensing was noted only in two.

While these studies did not deal with the issue of tour guides, they are mentioned above in order to demonstrate that, concerning most professions, the perception of licensing regulations constituting an 'insurance certificate' for the quality of services provided is a baseless myth. Similarly, within the context of tourism, Weiler and Black (2015: 150), in their extensive review of tour guiding, found that while licensing does set minimum guide standards, it "does not help achieve the quality assurance outcomes of raising awareness and appreciation of the importance and value of guiding, and rewarding advanced levels of role performance".

Yet another drawback associated with mandatory professional licensing to practice an occupation is that it stifles entrepreneurship and market innovation. Slivinski (2015: 1) revealed a discernable association between the percentage of low-income occupations licensed by a state and that state's average low income entrepreneurship rate: "the higher the rate of licensure of low-income occupations, the lower the rate of low-income entrepreneurship". Additionally, as noted by Kleiner (2015: 16), standardization through occupational licensing may also suppress innovation "by not allowing the introduction of new procedures or competitors because they do not accord with standard procedures established by a licensing board".

It should be remembered that not all the consumers seek the same level of quality; therefore, restricting entry by requiring licensure forces consumers to obtain a higher – and more expensive – level of quality of service than they actually need. While some tourists do demand well-informed and entertaining tour guides, other tourists hire guides simply to obtain assistance with geographic orientation within the tourism destination and with the handling of travel arrangements and bureaucracy

during the trip. However, licensure schemes for tour guides assume "one size fits all," without recognizing the vast heterogeneity of tourists' wants and needs. Moreover, standardized licensure schemes do not take into account the changing nature of organized tours and the rise in popularity of specialized, themed tours. For example, "Ghost Talk, Ghost Walk" is a tour company that conducts entertaining tours in Savannah, Georgia, which are based on several books telling the "spectral" history of the city. Despite offering a particularly focused tourist product, the company's guides were required to pass the city's general tour guide examination, which naturally did not include any questions about ghost stories and was entirely irrelevant to their job. After the company challenged in court the Savannah ordinance that prevents guides from working without a license, the ordinance was eventually repealed.

At present, it would seem that the use of coercive measures and government regulation, such as professional licensing, is unnecessary in light of the practice in most countries to institute noncompulsory measures to protect consumers and ensure quality of professional services. For example, when ruling the licensing exam for tour guides in Washington D.C. to be unconstitutional, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit stated the well-known fact that an abundance of voluntary measures has been developed in contemporary society to protect tourists against unscrupulous tour businesses, unethical guides or simply charlatans (cited in Shapiro, 2014, para 9):

*Further incentivizing a quality consumer experience are the numerous consumer review websites, like Yelp and TripAdvisor, which provide consumers a forum to rate the quality of their experiences. One need only peruse such websites to sample the expressed outrage and contempt that would likely befall a less than scrupulous tour guide. Put simply, bad reviews are bad for business. Plainly, then, a tour operator's self-interest diminishes—in a much more direct way than does the exam requirement—the harms the District merely hypothesizes . . . . That the coal of self-interest often yields a gem-like consumer experience should come as no surprise.*

In addition to rating and review services, there are other noncompulsory mechanisms available for quality assurance in the free market. Many firms and practitioners seek voluntary professional certification from private accrediting bodies in order to improve their reputation and better position themselves against competitors. Another option is the formation of voluntary membership associations, sustained

by members' fees, which oversee the professional performance of their members to ensure a reputation of excellence and thereby encourage more candidates to apply for membership.

### **Freedom of Speech**

Tour guiding serves important functions, but it is first and foremost the art of storytelling. Given the verbal nature of the occupation, licensing tour guides is essentially giving a governmental license to talk. However, this violation of freedom of speech does not receive much public and political criticism of the kind that would certainly be heard in other cases where governments and public officials decide who is qualified to talk. The following words of U.S. attorney Robert Everett Johnson (2015), who litigates cases protecting economic liberty and freedom of speech, clearly demonstrate the double standard applying to tour guiding as opposed to other forms of expression (para 4):

*Imagine if the government imposed that same requirement on others who make their living telling stories. The government might license comedians to be sure they have a cutting sense of humor; or the government might license novelists to be sure they can pace a plot. Perhaps the government could even license editorial writers to be sure their facts are accurate.*

In this context, we should consider the possibility that licensing tour guides could be focused on influencing the content of guide explanations and guaranteeing conformism with the government's desired political narrative. This can be seen, for example, in China, where tour guides are expected to demonstrate loyalty to socialist ideology and adherence to political correctness, in which violators are likely to face sanctions (Huang & Weiler (2010). However, even in liberal democracies the government may use licensing to monitor and limit freedom of speech. A few years ago, while calling for stricter regulation and enforcement in the field in Israel, the Israeli Minister of Tourism designate, Yariv Levin, expressed concern that unauthorized tour guides might damage the country's image (Rozenberg, 2016c, para 2):

*This situation is a scandal that must be put to an end. . . . There is a situation here that instead of tourists who come to us to hear, see and learn the facts as they are, they get kind of campaign that presents a narrative completely opposite, driven by nationalist motives of the other party. No country would allow that to happen within its borders, not on the part of*

*its citizens and certainly not by people who come from outside and guide these groups... [without strict regulatory mechanism] we creating here a situation that we bring in the tourists to explain to them exactly the opposite of what we want them to know, and create with our own hands negative ambassadors for Israel.*

A local Israeli tour guide raised similar concerns that unlicensed Palestinian tour guides might present a biased presentation that is incompatible with the Zionist narrative (Friedman, 2013, para 32):

*More tourists is good, but on the other hand Israel wants positive publicity, not so? Foreign tour guides [are] very biased in favor of one party only. Regarding Palestinian guides, you cannot tell me that a guide from Bethlehem, Ramallah and Jericho would present the State of Israel fairly. I argue that they deserve to guide in Bethlehem...but when they come to Masada or the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum it always sounds very bad.*

While the above concerns might be genuine, it is not difficult to see how tour guide licensing can be abused to accomplish political and propaganda objectives rather than to prevent potentially inaccurate historic and religious content in tour guide speech. Concerns about the country's image or the tour guide's ignorance do not justify violating the guides' freedom of expression, just as they do not justify regulation of this type of books, lectures or documentary films (Shapiro et al., 2013).

## CONCLUSION

French philosopher and economist Frédéric Bastiat (1850) explained in his celebrated essay "That Which Is Seen and That Which Is Not Seen" that the difference between a 'good' and a 'bad' economist is that the latter "takes account of the visible effect," and the former "takes account both of the effects which are seen and also of those which it is necessary to foresee." By the same token, supporters of mandatory professional licensing for tour guides tend to focus on its immediate (albeit often unproven) benefits, while ignoring or dismissing its less noticeable longer-term costs. *That which is seen* includes tight regulation on who can practice tour guiding – licensed guides who greatly benefit from higher pay and status – and, allegedly, better quality services for the tourists who can afford them. On the other hand, *that which is not seen* includes the unemployment caused by imposing requirements on those who seek to become tour

guides but cannot meet the licensing criteria (e.g., tuition fees and often-irrelevant educational requirements). Those who are excluded from working as tour guides may be forced to work in occupations with lower wages, while a high proportion of tourists may have no choice but to choose overpriced services or to give up the idea of hiring tour guides altogether. Licensing also impedes entrepreneurship and innovation, hinders geographical mobility, and unnecessarily expands the power of government agencies. Thus, the often-unnoticed costs of licensing tour guides are likely to outweigh its alleged benefits.

This commentary thus shows that tour guide licensing is not only ineffective and might create false expectations among tourists, but also substantially infringes upon fundamental individual rights and civil liberties, such as freedom of occupation and freedom of speech (see Table 1 for a summary of the main arguments). Licensing may be seen as a particularly excessive coercive measure in the light of the availability of voluntary alternatives for quality assurance offered by the private sector, such as certifying and rating bodies and professional associations, all of which can effectively attest to the qualifications and quality of tour guides (See Table 2 for elaboration on voluntary alternatives to professional licensing). As was demonstrated above, the wide-ranging negative ethical and practical implications of tour guide licensing suggests that both tourists and the tourism industry as a whole would be improved if the licensing practice were to be abolished. Aside from laws for protecting tourists against fraud and breach of contract, it is ideally held that governments should 'keep their hands off' tour guiding.

Table 1. *A summary of the economic costs of the professional licensing of tour guides and the violation of rights associated with it*

<b>ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES</b>	
<b>Service Quality and Safety Concerns</b>	
Less pressure to compete	Fewer guides will enter the profession than would do so without the obligation for licensing. In practice this means less pressure to offer high quality or lower prices in order to attract tourists.
Improper training requirements	The skills and knowledge required from tour guides vary from place to place and according to the characteristics of the tour. However, licensing imposes a single rigid set of standards, which forces guides to spend time and money learning useless skills and therefore discourages specialization.
False sense of security	Because of a possible incongruity between licensing standards and actual guiding requirements, the state's 'seal of approval' gives tourists a false sense of security concerning the quality of tour guides. In the absence of licensing, it is likely that the tourist would be encouraged to shop more intelligently for competent tour guides.
Creating a black market	Under a heavily regulated industry, some tour guides choose to ignore licensing standards and operate outside the law. As a result, tourists are more likely to become the victims of charlatans.
<b>Increasing Prices</b>	The occupational licensing regulations of tour guides leads to higher prices for tourists. Hence, licensing is a form of protectionism; it benefits current tour guides at the expense of tourists and potential competitors.
<b>Reducing Tourist Choice</b>	The reduction in the available pool of tour guides considerably diminishes consumer choice. Consequently, unless tourists wish to risk illegally hiring unlicensed tour guides, they are forced to pay artificially high prices.
<b>Reducing Innovation and Entrepreneurship</b>	Curtailing competition discourages innovation and instigates mediocrity. Without licensing laws that demand vast resources from tour guides, they would be free to offer alternative, specialized and/or lower-cost tours.
<b>FREEDOM TO WORK</b>	
<b>Barriers to Entry</b>	The occupational licensing of tour guides might prevent many qualified individuals from a career in this profession.
<b>Reduced Economic Liberty</b>	Occupational licensing laws infringe on basic individual rights to engage in the occupation of one's choice.
<b>Paternalism (Government Knows Best)</b>	At the basis of licensing logic is the perception that tourists are too incompetent to make independent decisions about the tour guides they wish to hire.
<b>Arbitrary Standards</b>	Licensing laws hurt tourists, who would willingly hire 'sub-par' tour guides for lower rates.
<b>FREEDOM OF SPEECH</b>	
	In liberal democracies the state does not choose who is or is not allowed to speak. According to this approach, the freedom of expression of the tour guides cannot be conditioned with undergoing particular training, passing certain exams and/or paying fees.

Source: Based on Summers (2007)

*Table 2. Alternatives to Professional Licensing of Tour Guides*

<b>Professional associations</b>	Tour guide associations promote the professional skills, knowledge and credibility of those engaged in the field. Typically a non-profit organization, a tour guide association fulfills its goal by publishing professional journals, organizing conferences and maintaining quality and ethical standards. It has been found that professional associations are viable mechanisms for assisting voluntary tour guide members in adopting adequate standards of practice and advanced levels of performance.
<b>Professional certification</b>	Typically earned from professional associations or private certifiers, an industry-driven certification is a designation earned by tour guides to guarantee an adequate qualification level for delivering competent, responsible and quality services to tourists. Many tour guides seek certification in order to improve their credibility, gain respect and recognition and to provide themselves with a competitive edge and powerful marketing tool.
<b>Codes of conduct</b>	A set of guidelines outlining the expected norms, behaviors, proper practices and responsibilities of tour guides. This is a popular mechanism for increasing the awareness and appreciation of good tour guide conduct. Codes of conduct are a classic form of industry-driven self-regulation with the potential to apply fundamental principles across the tour guide sector. Their voluntary nature also helps them to be accepted more openly by tour guides.
<b>Individual awards of excellence</b>	This mechanism, which is often operated by government and non-profit organizations, provides recognition and reward for tour guides who perform exceptionally well. The award programs acknowledge outstanding tour guides, provide role models for the industry, promote the value of excellency, provide a benchmark for 'best practice', and provide an incentive for tour guides to excel in their work.
<b>Independent rating bodies</b>	Organizations that publish information and reviews (e.g., via internet portals) about various tour guides around the world or in specific destinations that help tourists to find recommended tour guides and thus to plan their holidays better.

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Source: Weiler & Black (2015)

As noted earlier, this article did not purport to present a 'balanced picture' of the discussion of the necessity of licensing tour guides, but instead presents an ethical and practical stance that has not been sufficiently expressed in the academic literature of tourism. It is not anticipated that this article will be the 'end of the story' for the discussion, but rather an opening for the promotion of dialogue between tourism researchers as well as practitioners in a practice that is too often accepted

as a legitimate and effective means without a challenge and without thorough examination.

Furthermore, there is a substantial lack of research on the licensing of guides in general and their effectiveness and alternatives in particular. In order to advance this area, further research is required in order to clarify and confirm questions such as the implications of licensing on the quality of tour guides and tourist satisfaction, the economic costs of licensing tour guides, the implications of the licensing of guides on entrepreneurship and innovation in the field, and the limitations imposed on low-income people and minorities due to compulsory licensing. Additionally, future research should assess the effectiveness of the various alternatives to licensing and the best mechanisms for achieving professionalism in this sector without resorting to coercive measures such as licensing. In the words of Sir Winston Churchill: "...this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning".

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