

## A Study On The Communication And Emphatic Skills Of The Students Having Education On Tourism Sector

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### ABSTRACT

Communication is of great importance for the people to express themselves and maintain their lives. Thoughts and views should be transferred to others in tourism industry in which people interaction is rich, and it is only by this way possible to get along with others. It can be said that communication has a function to connect the parties. If the communication is insufficient, it means that some problems may arise while servicing. This situation results in both dissatisfaction of the customers and a decrease in the service standard of the firm. For this reason, communication barriers should be eliminated.

An efficient management in businesses relies on an effective communication process. The views and the decisions of the management should be transferred in a way that contains mutual feelings and gestures of both sender and receiver. So, communication forms the basis of organizational activities. Moreover, in order to mention about the communication, there should be a relationship between the individuals that requires the mutual exchange of thoughts, views and knowledge among them.

Tourism enterprises are well established on the human relations and are well known with their characteristics of labor intensively and communication insensitivity. Some of the problems in tourism industry which is important regarding to the face to face communication both in guest level and managerial level arise from the lack of direct and inefficient communication. However, direct communication prevents the enterprises from the problems caused by misunderstanding and hear saying. It might be said that industrial staff who has efficient communication skills could handle the problems both arising inside the enterprise or arising from the tourists efficiently. Additionally, skilled personnel about efficient communication and empathy might think and behave more problem focused and objective.

Due to the relative importance of this subject, this study is focused on the tourism education students that are thought as prospective workers for tourism industry. Data gathered from 300 hundred students who are being educated in various tourism departments at Selcuk University are classified, processed and evaluated by means of statistical software SPSS for Windows 17.0.

**Keywords:** Tourism Services, Empathical Skills, Communication.

## Turizm Sektörüne Yönelik Eğitim Alan Öğrencilerin İletişim ve Empatik Becerilerine İlişkin Bir Araştırma

### ÖZET

Bireylerin kendilerini ifade etmeleri ve hayatlarını aksamadan sürdürebilmeleri için iletişim ciddi bir öneme sahiptir. İnsan ilişkilerinin yoğun olduğu turizm endüstrisinde de düşüncelerin aktarılması, fikirlerin açıklanması gerekmekte ancak bu şekilde anlaşmalar sağlanabilmektedir. Bu anlamda iletişimin bir çeşit tarafları birbirine bağlama işlevi olduğu söylenebilir. İletişimin yetersiz olması ise hizmetin verilmesi esnasında bazı sorunların ortaya çıkması anlamına gelmektedir. Bu durum personel ile misafirlerde tatminsizliğe yol açmakta hem de işletmede hizmet kalitesini düşürmektedir. Bunun önlenmesi için de iletişimi önleyen engellerin ortadan kaldırılması gerekir.

İşletme ve kuruluşlarda etkin bir yönetim iyi bir iletişim sürecine dayanmaktadır. Yönetimin fikir ve kararları çeşitli biçimlerde gönderici ve alıcının karşılıklı duygu ve jestlerini de içererek şekilde iletilmelidir. Yani iletişim, örgütsel faaliyetlerin temelini oluşturmaktadır. Öte yandan iletişimden bahsedebilmek için bireyler arasında karşılıklı olarak fikir, bilgi ve duygu alışverişini zorunlu kılan bir ilişkinin olması gerekmektedir.

Turizm işletmeleri, emek yoğun işletmeler olarak insan ilişkilerinin ve iletişimin ön planda olduğu hizmet işletmeleridir. Birebir ilişkilerin hem yönetim hem de turistler açısından önem taşıdığı turizm endüstrisinde yaşanabilecek sorunlar zaman zaman etkin ve doğrudan iletişimsizlikten kaynaklanmaktadır. Oysa doğrudan iletişim, işletmelerde problemlerin, aksaklıkların doğmasını engellemekte, yanlış anlaşılmalara meydan vermemekte ve en önemlisi dedikodulara engellemektedir. Etkin iletişim becerisine sahip olan sektör çalışanlarının, gerek kurum içi gerekse misafirlere yönelik sorunlarla daha etkin başa çıkabilen, kendine daha çok güvenen, sorunlar karşısında objektif davranabilen ve problem-çözüm odaklı düşünebilen kişiler olduğu söylenebilir.

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Konunun bu öneminden dolayı araştırma, Turizm eğitimi alan ve okul sonrası sektörde çalışacak öğrencilerin iletişim ve empatik becerilerini belirlemeye yönelik olarak yapılmıştır. Selçuk Üniversitesinde Turizm Eğitimi alan 300 öğrenci üzerinde yapılan araştırmada elde dilden veriler, Spss for Windows 17.0 istatistik paket programına kodlanarak yüklenmiştir. Daha sonra yine bu program aracılığıyla tasnif ve analiz edilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Turizm Hizmetleri, Empatik Beceriler, İletişim

## INTRODUCTION

One of the attention-grabbing elements in the relations among people is communications. Communications, however, has an important place also in the relations among groups and organizations, not only in the relations among people. When considered the competition-focused business life of the present time, communications becomes determinative for the relations at every level from the level of individual to the level of organization. Even if communications has an importance in terms of all the sectors, it rather bursts into prominence particularly in the service-intensive sectors. In this point, the tourism sector presents a labor-intensive characteristic due to its structure; as for “human”, who is present at the focus of communication process, draws attention as an important resource, that’s why.

Certainly, there are many factors that make the communication process so much crucial in terms of the service sector. As intercommunications, which actualizes between workpeople that serve for tourism and consumers, affects on a great deal of organizational variables like management performance, productivity, image, competitive advantage and organizational climate (milieu), it may be extremely determinative on the matters such the loyalty and satisfaction of a consumer as well. In this context, the verbal and nonverbal communication capabilities and empathic skills, which the workpeople of the sector have got, become more of an issue.

## 1. COMMUNICATIONS AND EMPATHIC SKILLS

Communications is the process in which a message is conveyed from someone into another. Whether it becomes verbal or non-verbal, “the process of communications” includes a receiver and a sender; as for the process consists of five significant phases. In this process, the sender has thinking; s/he transforms the thinking into a message by coding; the message is carried into the receiver by a channel; the receiver analyzes and perceives the message and sends the feedback concerning with the message, which it takes, to the sender. Nevertheless, despite communications, as explained above, seems a simple process, it reflects a more complicated process for individuals and organizations (Eren, 2001: 25). It is a matter that communications meet with a lot of obstacles in this process. Verbal or nonverbal incoherent messages; ineffective listening perfection; personal characteristics; differences of perception; time limitations; the differences related to age, gender, race and culture; physical conditions; and semantic factors; these are the ones that are most frequently prevailed among them (James and Cinelli, 2003: 41). An effective process of communications should be fictionalized, taking these factors into account. As the skills of communication are highly significant especially for understanding other people and for getting sensitive to see their emotion and thought by identifying with them, it is the main factor to achieve the behavior change. One of the most important approaches for developing the skills of communication is empathy. The approach that a person is able to live at that moment what the person opposite him/her feels and that s/he has the ability to be able to give him/her right has a place in a sound and effective communications. To have been developed this skill that also can be called as “the skills of empathy” plays an important role in the interpersonal communications. In an intercommunication activity, attitude and behavior and knowledge and experiences, which a resource owns, are the variables that will directly affect on his/her skills of communications (Kunucen, 2006: 58). These variables, depending on personal structure and other factors, are present at people in the different levels of activity.

If thought that communications is an event of action and reaction and that it is given a necessary answer against an event, problem or state and that it is a knowledge sharing and an interchange of message, the including of empathy with communications into the process becomes unavoidable that it is seen as an utmost important way of solution with regards to people are gotten along more well and to problems are effectively and exuberantly solved (Rogers, 1983: 103-124). The being empathic is the main characteristic of a wise behavior emotionally. The concept of empathy has an undeniable importance for

providing of the tourism services, especially, for making a sound communication. People feel that they are understood and attached importance to themselves when empathized with them. With regard to be understood and attached importance by other people relieves us; we feel ourselves good (Dokmen, 2004: 147). This state plays an important role for the efficiency of the social relationships that will be built.

It can be said that the individuals, who have a high capability of communications, have the skills for showing behaviors and style of communications suited to the present condition and environment. Which strategy the conflicting individuals will use and how they will behave is connected not only with the perception of his/her own communication adequacy but also with his/her opinion about the communication adequacy of the opposite side. As a consequence of this, it can be said that the individuals, who have got similar communication adequacy and style, may understand each other all the better (Karip, 2003: 112-113).

To own the skills that may lead other people give positive reactions and that may prevent their negative reactions is quite significant for every individual. People want to have the behavior forms that will enable to interaction with others and that is socially acceptable and hindrance to be objected. These behavior forms generally show itself as the skills of communications in the life. The skills of communications, for individuals, take its place in the life as things *sine qua non*, and in this way, they have also significant roles. That they are in a characteristic that facilitates to be in communication/interaction with other people increases the importance of the functions of these skills in the interpersonal context (Erozkan, 2005: 182). It can be said that a sound relationship is directly related to the skills of communications.

In the communications in which we are, to understand the person opposite us and to try to understand him/her with a positive attitude even if we do not accept the things that s/he says is significant. A positive attitude, in communications, requires to use the effective skills of communications and provides that the person opposite us express him/herself easefully, and also it help us to be able to understand. In communications, that one of the parties has a negative attitude leads both sides feel itself nervous and try to push its desires through. The most important skills necessary for an effective communication are effective listening and effective reacting (Cihangir, 2004: 6).

Besides that, the subsistence of managements in global competitive environment is primarily tied that they display performance highly. That's why, it is clear that the communication problems, which will be lived among workpeople working in the tourism sector and managers and customers, will affect on both working performance and organizational performance (Uysal, 2003: 146). The communication problems lived in the intercultural interaction due to the structure of tourism sector are a problem that negatively affect on organizational performance.

## **2. INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS IN THE OFFER OF THE TOURISM SERVICES**

Many people are in the position of making contacts with the members of other cultures and even of working together with them in the present day. Therefore, it becomes obligatory to be known the niceties of intercultural communications in various conditions. A great many individuals, such tourists being in other cultures, foreign students, businesspeople travelling for commercial relationships, public servants, immigrants, refugees and even the people meeting with foreign tourists despite they leave from their own country, are obliged to be aware of the rules of intercultural communications (Tabakci, 2008: 43).

Tourism sector enables that different cultures come together. The most important share, in this sector that workpeople and customers coming from various cultures remain together and that the service is present, belongs to "communications", undoubtedly. In addition to cultural differences, linguistic difference is another factor that put communications in jeopardy. As the workpeople that have not the perfection of speaking different languages remain incapable to satisfy the demands of customers, the nonverbal communication elements, which they use while trying to overjump the obstruction of communications, may play sometimes positive and sometimes negative roles in the truly and effectively performing of communications at the same time.

As for another different and significant dimension in communications is the style of communications that individuals use. When thought that the style of communications, which workpeople and customers use in the process in which they are in interaction, has a significant share in the service perceived, the styles of communications, such the nonverbal communication elements, draw attention as another variable that is reflected on the job performance of workpeople (Erkus and Gunlu, 2009: 14).

When individuals belonging to different cultures meet each other, some problems emerging from the cultural standings of individuals can come out in the open. These difficulties cause to form negative impressions about their values and cultures with mutual misunderstandings. In order to abstain from intercultural misunderstandings, messages should be sent by considering them in a cultural context and by paying attention to the differences between the sender and the receiver (Fujimoto and et al., 2007: 14).

A person who is able to make an effective intercultural contact is the person who is able to make, both verbal and nonverbal, an effective contact with other person coming from a different culture. The skill of establishing and maintaining a relationship and some personal characteristics, such that is able to share knowledge effectively and that is to be curious, are the features having to be owned for the adequacy of intercultural communications. For the adequacy of intercultural communications, it is not enough only to closely know the culture and the language. Moreover, some characteristics should be present as is able to develop empathy and cope with worry and indefiniteness and like being friendly and charismatically (Matveev and Mitler, 2004: 105).

In intercultural communications, it should be regarded that the language and behavior norms of a community do not always represent the real example of language usage and behavior forms. Secondly, it should be taken into account that the language norms are usually in an interaction with the norms of language usage. These can differ according to each example of culture (Oksaar, 2008: 3).

In intercultural communications, it has to be aware of the expression differences like voices, tone of voice and mimics. The expressions coming from different cultures can be comprehended only in this way (Beamer, 1992: 293). The adequacy of intercultural communications is bound that the message sent is coded in a form, which a receiver is able to understand and interpret as suited to the intention of the resource, and that a receiver is aware of the message that s/he perceives is the product of a different coding system. Communicative adequacy necessitates not only to know the language but also what will be said to whom and how this will be said properly (Tabakci, 2008: 42). In addition to this, the milieu in which the message is given is considerable effective in terms of the perception of the message.

### **3. THE FINDINGS OF THE FIELD RESEARCH DONE THE OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH**

The objective of the Study is to determine the skills of communication and empathy of the students who study in the units of Selcuk University in which tourism training is provided. In addition to this, it is to be able to put forward the results concerning with the skills of communications that these students who will provide the service of tourism after graduating have got.

#### *The Scope Of The Research*

The research contains the students who study in the units of Selcuk University in which tourism training is provided.

#### *The Method Of The Research*

In the Research, it has been used the method of survey consisting of 2 chapters and 28 questions that were prepared as appropriate for the objective. The prepared survey forms have been applied on 300 students who were selected by random sampling, and the datum collected has been loaded into *the SPSS 17.0 packaged software of statistics* by coding. Thereafter, it has been classified and analyzed by the help of this program. In the analyses, frequency distribution has been used.

The demographic features of the students who attended into our research become like this: % 60,7 of the students is gentleman and % 39,3 is lady. The educational status of the students' fathers: % 39,7, primary school. % 21, secondary school. % 23,3, high school and % 16 is graduate student. As for their

mothers' status is like this: % 61,3, primary school. % 22, secondary school. % 13, high school and % 3,7, graduate student. The students' families have an income level at the rates of % 7 low, % 91 middle and % 2 high. Besides, the foreign language levels of the students are in the level of % 36 low, % 56,3 middle, and % 2 high.

**Table 1.** The Findings Concerning With the Skills of Communications of the Students

Expressions	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Generally		Always	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
I try to understand tourists.	6	2,0	24	8,0	75	25,0	99	33,0	96	32,0
I listen to advices and offers that come from the tourists who I make a contact.	21	7,0	51	17,0	66	22,0	83	27,7	79	26,3
I have difficulty in conveying my thoughts to tourists.	11	3,7	48	16,0	109	36,3	84	28,0	48	16,0
I can make an effective eye contact, while speaking.	6	2,0	9	3,0	65	21,7	98	32,7	122	40,7
I do not like to be criticized by tourists.	78	26,0	50	16,7	69	23,0	73	24,3	30	10,0
I set aside enough time for listening the things that tourists want to tell.	12	4,0	24	8,0	60	20,0	103	34,3	101	33,7
I generally give the right of speech for the tourist opposite me.	6	2,0	3	1,0	18	6,0	92	30,7	181	60,3
I feel discomfort when I make a contact with a tourist of the opposite sex.	190	63,3	59	19,7	30	10,0	18	6,0	3	1,0
Tourists lose patience while speaking; I chip in their word.	229	76,3	41	13,7	21	7,0	6	2,0	3	1,0
I feel myself bored while listening to tourists.	115	38,3	80	26,7	72	24,0	18	6,0	15	5,0
I convey my critiques to the tourist opposite me without treading on his/her toes.	27	9,0	24	8,0	60	20,0	100	33,3	89	29,7
I do not hesitate to take the first step while speaking with a tourist.	33	11,0	33	11,0	45	15,0	81	27,0	108	36,0
While speaking, I make a clear, plain and correct sentence.	9	3,0	33	11,0	48	16,0	113	37,7	97	32,3
Even if I do not share the same opinion with the tourist opposite me, I respect his/her thoughts.	6	2,0	12	4,0	39	13,0	66	22,0	177	59,0
I try to understand whether the tourist opposite me is willing for speaking and listening or not.	12	4,0	24	8,0	60	20,0	127	42,3	77	25,7
I easily accept my false attitude and behaviors	24	8,0	45	15,0	39	13,0	100	33,3	92	30,7
I ask questions to better understand the tourist whom I listen.	3	1,0	33	11,0	63	21,0	128	42,7	70	23,3
While meeting with tourists, I make some things that will make them feel better, knowingly.	15	5,0	30	10,0	84	28,0	106	35,3	65	21,7
I try to control and stereotype tourists at will.	107	35,7	67	22,3	69	23,0	45	15,0	12	4,0
At the end of a discussion, I can accept that the thoughts I defend are false.	39	13,0	60	20,0	75	25,0	67	22,3	59	19,7
I sit in judgment the emotions and thoughts of the tourist opposite me that are contrary to me.	98	32,7	77	25,7	62	20,7	42	14,0	21	7,0
I can fix my tone of voice according to the peculiarity of a matter.	3	1,0	24	8,0	30	10,0	106	35,3	137	45,7
I think that the skills of communications are important for the providing of the tourism services.	3	1,0	9	3,0	30	10,0	38	12,7	220	73,3

As seen in the Table 1 above, it has been reached these findings in the Research.

As % 65 of the students attending to the Research expresses that they try to understand them in the communications with tourists, % 10 of them states that they are not willing for understanding them, *au contraire*. While % 54 of the students sincerely listens to advices and offers coming from tourists, % 24 points out that they are closed to advices and offers. While % 19,7 of the students does not have difficulty in thoughts are conveyed to tourists, it has seen that a large number of the students, as % 44, lives difficulty. While % 73,4 of the students is able to make an effective eye contact while speaking, % 5 of them is not able to make it. While the rate of the ones who are open to criticism becomes % 34,3, the rate of the ones who do not like criticism comes true as % 42,7. While the rate of the ones who set aside enough time for listening the things that tourists want to tell is % 68, as for the rate of the ones who do not set aside enough time becomes % 12. % 91 of the students gives the right to speech to the tourist opposite them; a low rate, as % 3, is unwilling for giving the right of speech. % 83 of the students does

not feel any discomfort while making a contact with a tourist in opposite gender, but a rate for % 7 feels discomfort because of opposite gender. The ones who listen to their words without interrupting while speaking with tourists has become in a high rate as % 90. % 65 of the students listens to tourists without being bored; as for % 11 of them is bored while listening to tourists. While % 63 of the students conveys their critiques towards tourists without treading on their toes, % 17 of them does not pay attention to it. While % 63 of the students does not abstain from taking the first step while speaking with a tourist, % 22 of them shows shyness. As % 70 of the students pays attention to make clear, plain and correct sentences while speaking with tourists, % 14 of them behaves inattentively while making a sentence. As the rate of the ones who respect their thoughts even if they do not share the same opinion with the tourist opposite them becomes % 81, the rate of the ones who do not respect actualizes as % 6. While the rate of the students who try to understand whether or not the tourist is willing for speaking and listening is % 68, as for the rate of the ones who do not consider it becomes % 12. As % 64 of the students easily accepts their false attitudes and behaviors, % 23 of them does not accept it easily. While % 66 of the students asks questions to better understand the tourist s/he listens, % 12 of them do not ask any question. Together with the rate of the ones who exhibit behaviors knowingly that will make them feel better while meeting with tourists has become % 57, as for the rate of the ones who has not exhibited behaviors about making them feel better has been % 15. The rate of the ones who try to control and stereotype tourists at will is % 19, and with regard to the rate of the ones who is not in like this attitude, it actualizes as % 58. While the rate of the ones who can accept in the end of the discussion that the thoughts s/he defends are false is % 42, the rate of the ones who do not accept its falseness becomes % 33. % 21 of the students sits in judgment the tourists' emotions and thoughts that are contrary to themselves, and % 58,4 of them do not judge it. As % 81 of the students fixes their tones of voices according to the feature of the matter, % 9 of them does not go to such arrangement. While the rate of the ones, who consider that the skills of communications, are significant for the providing of the tourism services is % 86, with regard to the rate of the ones, who think that it is not significant, actualizes as % 4.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Because tourism sector bears a labor intensive feature, mutual communications, which actualizes between workpeople providing for tourism service and customers, can be determinative utmost also in some matters like a customer's loyalty and satisfaction. The skills of communications, which the people who get the training of tourism in the academic rank and who will work in the sector later, are important in this perspective. In this Study, it has been tried to determine the skills of communications of the students who get the training of tourism at Selcuk University and reached these following results.

In the performing of an effective communications, to try to understand a person opposite is an important element. A substantial part of the students attending to the Research sees like this capability in themselves. Together with the considering of advices and offers, which come from tourists for the providing of the tourism services, is significant in terms of the tourist's satisfaction, the better part of the ones attending to the Research is open to advices and offers coming. In the effectively performing of communications, parties should convey their thoughts to the opposite side without difficulty. However, a very little part of the ones attending to the Research is able to perform it very easily; as for a substantial part of them has difficulty. The reason of this can be arisen from that they have not an adequately foreign language. Making an effective eye contact during face-to-face communication is important in terms of the efficiency of messages, and it has been seen that a considerable part of the students attending to the Research has got this skill. To be open to criticism is important with regards to the services of tourism are more effectively performed, but it has been seen in our Research that a little part of the students is open to criticisms. To make an effective listening for succeeding in communications is significant, and it has been understood that a substantial part of the ones attending to the Research has got the skill of listening a tourist opposite him/her. Because giving a right to speech for a person opposite during speaking is an indication of the valuing for him/her, it is important for understanding his/her wants, besides. Almost all the ones attending to the Research listens to them, giving a right to speech for tourists. Some personality structures can feel apprehension with making a contact with opposite gender; nevertheless, a considerable

part of the ones attending to the Research can easily make a contact with opposite gender. The constructively conveying of the critiques without being unkind, which will be expressed for a person opposite, is a significant element in providing for the soundly continuation of communications; the better part of the ones attending to the Research pays attention to this state. Regarding making a contact with a tourist, the better part of the students is able to do it without showing any shyness and also pays attention to make correct sentences while speaking. It is natural that the tourists coming from different cultural structures have got different thoughts, and a substantial part of the students respects to these differences. It is important to be or not to be willing for making a contact in terms of the soundly performing of communications, and a considerable part of the students takes a tourist's wills into account. A substantial part of the students easily accepts their false and shows some behaviors that will make a tourist feel better during communication. The judgment of the tourists' emotions and thoughts, who come from a different culture, can affect on the process of communication in negative way, and it has been noticed that approximately the half part of the students judge tourists. In addition to this, it has been understood that the students use their tones of voices effectively, depending on the feature of the matter. A considerable part of the students thinks that the skills of communications have a significant place for the providing of the tourism services.

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