Iranian Female Tour Guides’ Perceptions of Working in the Tourism Industry

2016-08-31
Supervisor: Kerstin Westin

Mahdi Mahdavi zafarghandi
# Contents

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 3
Aim and Research Questions .......................................................................................... 4
Theoretical Point of Departure/ Literature Review ......................................................... 5
Tour Guides; Act as a “Buffer”: ....................................................................................... 7
Tour Guides; New Role or Extension of Their Traditional Domestic Role? ...................... 8
Patriarchal Society as a Structural Barrier of Tour Guides .............................................. 8
Sexualized Body: Veiling or Unveiling? Movement in Masculine Society ......................... 9
Role and Workplace Expectations ................................................................................. 9
Research Methodology .................................................................................................. 10
Sampling ......................................................................................................................... 11
Interviews ......................................................................................................................... 12
Empirical Considerations: ............................................................................................. 14
Ethical Consideration ..................................................................................................... 14
Results and Discussions ............................................................................................... 16
Role Perceptions and Expectations ................................................................................. 17
Workplace; Vulnerability of Female Tour Guides: ......................................................... 21
Family .............................................................................................................................. 24
Before Marriage ............................................................................................................. 24
After Marriage ................................................................................................................ 28
Significant Others’ Opinions; Perceptions of Tourists and Colleagues: ......................... 32
Foreign Tourists’ Opinions ............................................................................................... 33
Iranian Tourists’ Opinions and Reactions ..................................................................... 34
Manager of Tourism Agencies Opinions ....................................................................... 35
Male Colleagues’ Opinion .............................................................................................. 36
Concluding Discussion ................................................................................................... 38
Appendix A ...................................................................................................................... 42
References ....................................................................................................................... 44
“Feminism is not about making women stronger. Women are already strong. It’s about changing the way the world perceives that strength.”

G.D. Anderson
Introduction

There is a lot of evidence for gender inequality which Iranian women are faced with, such as the prohibition of musical performance, banned attendance in men sports stadiums, compulsory Hijab, etc. Moreover, according to Global Gender Gap Report (2014), Iran’s rank is 137 among 142 countries- among the ten countries with the highest gap between men and women based on indexes of this report. According to statistics of the World Bank (2015), female labor force participation rate in Iran is 17%; this rate in neighboring countries like Pakistan is 24%, while the overall global female labor force participation rate is 50.3 percent, meaning that half of all women of working age are either in employment or looking for a job. Also, the unemployment rate of women 19.2% is 2 times greater than the unemployment rate of men 9% (Statistical Centre of Iran, 2015a), while after the revolution in 1979 the literacy rate increased to 92.4% in 2011 (Statistical Centre of Iran, 2015b). Female to male ratio in literacy rate, enrollment in primary and secondary education, are respectively 0.89, 0.98, and 0.95 (World Economic Forum, 2014). Also, the rate of higher education of women is really high. 60 percent of students at universities are female (ISNA, 2015). Although many women have received higher education, their job prospects have not improved adequately yet; unemployment level of women is considerably high. The condition of Iranian women in a male-dominated market is complicated- and they are faced with overt discrimination. In Iran, women face considerable barriers for entering the labor market. The problem of women's unemployment is severe; women try to pass the visible and hidden impediments.

According to the World Bank Group (2015), in terms of population and economy, Iran has the second place in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). “Iran ranks second in the world in natural gas reserves and fourth in proven crude oil reserves. -Aggregate GDP and government revenues still depend to a large extent on oil revenues” (World Bank Group, 2015). Nowadays, "economy without oil" has turned into a hot topic in Iranian academia. This condition will be particularly true about the future of Iran when there will be less oil to live on, and, as a result, non-oil economy base, such as industrial manufacturing, agricultural productions, and tourism can be highlighted. Countries like Iran with a large area, rich history and culture (UNESCO, 2015), and high biodiversity have a great potential for the tourism industry. Tourism industry can occupy a significant place in GDP of Iran's economy.

One of the main focuses in development is sustainable and balanced development in all parts of a country- urban and rural, male and female. What is more important to this study is the role of tourism industry during its development process in the improvement of women's situation in the economy and society. Tourism is not the ultimate solution but it can create equal opportunities for all countries with oil-based rentier economy (Mansfeld & Winckler, 2007 & 2008), specifically, when it comes to women that include half of the population and are trying to overcome the difficulties originated from gender inequality. Ateljevic (2008), as a supervisor of a report titled “Women Empowerment Through Tourism” shows 15 successful cases from Africa, Asia, East Europe, Middle East and Latin America. “Promoting development in economically marginalised regions, encouraging sustainable use of natural
resources and enhancing the control of local people over development in their surrounding area” (Ampumuza, C., et al, 2008:4) are obvious opportunities that tourism would provide for women’s involvement in this industry.

Under these circumstances, tourism industry can create jobs, especially for women, because most of the stakeholders of this industry are private enterprises. It is expected that tourism industry be one of the fields that can boost female employment and therefore, can help redress the balance and empower women in Iran. Equal opportunities in employment assist them for empowerment. Being a tour guide is one of these opportunities, although most jobs are created elsewhere, e.g. hotels and restaurants. But for this thesis, tour guides are important from two aspects: first, it is a really challenging condition that you find out what you are capable of and second; it is not an extension of traditional domestic roles, and it is a new role for women in a male-dominated job market.

Aim and Research Questions

This study aims to investigate how female tour guides perceive their roles in the tourism industry and the elements of these perceptions among their family, colleagues, and tourists who could serve empowering or disempowering. So the research questions are:

- What are female tour guides’ perceptions of their role and workplace?
- How do the female tour guides perceive their family’s influence on their work as tour guides?
- How do the female tour guides perceive that they are or are not supported by domestic and foreign tourists? How do they perceive opinions of significant others such as tourists and managers?
- What are male tour guides’ perceptions of female tour guides’ situation?
Theoretical Point of Departure/ Literature Review

Esther Boserup (1970) in her book ‘Woman's Role in Economic Development’ sheds light on the ignored role of women in the economy. Before 1970, it was supposed that the development process affected males and females similarly. Productivity was associated with the cash economy and therefore, most of the women’s works were unnoticed. “When it became apparent that economic development did not automatically eradicate poverty through trickle-down effects, the problems of distribution and equality of benefits to the various segments of populations become a major importance in development theory” (Momsen, 2004: 11). Gender dimension was added to the study of the development process and demanded a new theoretical approach to come up with satisfactory explanations.

The empowerment approaches that was born in the 1980s looks for the best framework in development studies; empowerment was regarded as a weapon of the weak, best wielded through grassroots and participatory activities (Parpart, 2002). However, empowerment has deep meaning and by mid-1990s, some mainstream development agencies had begun to adopt the term. For the most part, these institutions see empowerment as a means of enhancing efficiency and productivity without changing the social-cultural situation. The alternative approach views empowerment as a method of social transformation and achieving gender equality. Jo Rowland (1997) sees empowerment as a comprehensive development process that qualifies people for gaining self-confidence and self-esteem, so letting both men and women to participate actively in development decision-making.

Literature on women empowerment is usually a part of gender studies and is often not linked to the tourism community development literature, although there have been some attempts to link this gender issues and women empowerment to tourism community development in particular (Momsen, 2004) and community development in general, such as that in the book Myth of Community: Gender Issues in Participatory Development. Scheyvens (1999) has provided a framework presenting different forms of empowerment in order to determine the impact of ecotourism initiatives on local communities, which does not include an explicit discussion of gender issues: economic empowerment, psychological empowerment, social empowerment, and political empowerment (Peeters and Ateljevie, 2009). The empowerment framework that is applicable to western and developing-country contexts “attempts to emphasise the importance of local communities having some control over, and sharing in the benefits of, ecotourism initiatives in their area.” (Scheyvens, 1999:249)

Economic empowerment happens when ecotourism ventures to empower the community with formal or informal employment and business opportunities. Periodic and seasonal income shapes the problems of economic empowerment (Scheyvens ,1999).Psychological empowerment in the Scheyvens(1999,2000) research means “ a local community which is optimistic about the future, has faith in the abilities of its residents, is relatively self-reliant and demonstrates pride in traditions and culture” (Scheyvens ,2000:239). Social empowerment in this framework defined as a “a community’s sense of cohesion and
The table below shows the signs of empowerment and disempowerment of members of communities.

**Framework of Scheyvens (1999) about the Impacts of Ecotourism Initiatives on Local Communities (Scheyvens, 1999:247)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Signs of empowerment</th>
<th>Signs of disempowerment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic empowerment</strong></td>
<td>“Ecotourism brings lasting economic gains to a local community. Cash earned is shared between many households in the community. There are visible signs of improvements from the cash that is earned”</td>
<td>“Most profits go to local elites, outside operators, government agencies, etc. Only a few individuals or families gain direct financial benefits from ecotourism, while others cannot find a way to share in these economic benefits because they lack capital and/or appropriate skills.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychological empowerment</strong></td>
<td>“Self-esteem of many community members is enhanced because of outside recognition of the uniqueness and value of their culture, their natural resources and their traditional knowledge. Increasing confidence of community members leads them to seek out further education and training opportunities. Access to employment and cash leads to an increase in status for traditionally low-status sectors of society e.g. women, youths.”</td>
<td>“Many people have not shared in the benefits of ecotourism, yet they may face hardships because of reduced access to the resources of a protected area. They are thus confused, frustrated, disinterested or disillusioned with the initiative.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social empowerment</strong></td>
<td>“Ecotourism maintains or enhances the local community’s equilibrium. Community cohesion is improved as individuals and families work together to build a successful ecotourism venture.”</td>
<td>“Disharmony and social decay. Many in the community take on outside values and lose respect for traditional culture and for elders. Disadvantaged groups (e.g. women) bear the brunt of problems associated with the ecotourism initiative and fail to share equitably in its benefits. Rather than cooperating, individuals, families, ethnic or socio-economic groups compete with each other for the perceived benefits of ecotourism. Resentment and jealousy are commonplace.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political empowerment</strong></td>
<td>“The community’s political structure, which fairly represents the needs and interests of all community groups, provides a forum through which people can raise questions relating to the ecotourism venture and have their concerns dealt with.”</td>
<td>“The community has an autocratic and/or self-interested leadership. Agencies initiating or implementing the ecotourism venture treat communities as passive beneficiaries, failing to involve them in decision-making.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The UNWTO (2011) “Global Report on Women in Tourism, 2010” draws a comprehensive picture of women’s global tourism employment. Women are occupied Two-thirds of world’s workforce of tourism that “the industry’s low entry barriers and flexible working hours” for women (Pritchard, 2014:316). Entrepreneurial opportunities for women (del Mar Alonso-Almeida, 2012) are twice in comparison with other industrial sectors (Pritchard, 2014:316). Thus, “even in areas where women in tourism perform better than women in other sectors of the economy, women still lag far behind men” (UNWTO, 2011:43). Jobs have noticeable effects on the personal and social aspect of empowerment. Tour guiding is a challenging job position in the tourism market. Tour guides must deal with contradicting expectations of the tourists and the employers (Prakash et al., 2011). In this occupation, sense of leadership and responsibility mix up as the travel aspect combines business with pleasure. Female tour guides in a male-dominant job market are trying to empower themselves.

Tour Guides: Act as a “Buffer”

As Ang (1990 in Prakash et al., 2011) mentioned, tour guides are “buffers” between tourists and insufficient infrastructures in the tourism industry. Tour guides must deal with multiple stakeholders at the same time. Employers, visitors, and host communities expect tour guides conflicting desires. On the one hand, Tourists need safe and healthy travels with valuable experiences. Apparently, the level of expectations related to specific cultural background, physical and mental abilities, and strong interests in particular subject matters. But On the other hand, travel agencies suppose the guides to present high-quality services to the tourists. Also, they should accept tour responsibilities such as itinerary, manage a group, and so on to ensure customer’s satisfaction and the profit margin (Weiler and Ham, 2002). This condition remains after twenty-five years in developing countries like Iran. The tour guides are widely criticized by tourists for the problems of travel. They are expected to solve all the problems during the tour. According to Prakash et al. (2011:66) “Tour guides may be the most maligned people in the world of travel.”

Although in the Foucauldian perspective about tourism industry (Cheong and Miller, 2000) the role of the tour guides can be interpreted as controllers of the movements of tourists; there are opportunities for tourists to maximize their pleasure by choosing an organized travel. Satisfactions and dissatisfactions of customers from all service providers transfer to tour guides at the first step.
Tour Guides, New Role or Extension of Their Traditional Domestic Role?

In tourism industry, women mostly hold low-paid, low-skilled positions that show “sexualized labor division” in the market. They are defined as an extension of traditional domestic roles. The host family sector or the commercial home enterprises are two examples of this category (Peeters and Ateljevie, 2009). Tour guides have special positions in the tourism industry because it is a highly-skilled and partially well-paid job. According to Veijola and Valtion (2007) in their article “The Body in Tourism Industry” describe the role of the young female body in the marketing of tourism industry when they explain the position of the hostess in airlines. The extension of traditional domestic role is defined in this way: “we will have ‘someone’ who is awake, available, and smiling 24 hours a day, for millions of customers simultaneously” (Veijola and Valtion, 2007:27).

They suggest four Ss instead of the famous four Ss of tourism (sand, sun, sea, and sex): “smiling, sincerity, serendipity, and sexuality” (Veijola and Valtion, 2007: 28). These words show that it is expected that women work in tourism industry perform in this manner. On the other hand, while sex tourism is the minority part of this industry, sexual gaze is a dominant issue at all parts. Veijola and Valtion (2007) help us realize that the mixture of economy and masculine culture how formed is the women’s body in the tourism industry, that women participation up to 70 percent at the regional level (Baum, 2013).

Patriarchal Society as a Structural Barrier for Tour Guides

Patriarchal structure spreads in all aspects of social and cultural life. The patriarchal system reproduces stereotypes. As Rothman (1994) expresses patriarchy is more than the dominance of the father. “The term technically means “rules of father” but in its current practical usage, it more often refers to any system of male superiority and female inferiority” (Rothman, 1994:140). Women’s situation has many similarities in different countries in Middle East and North Africa; Gender Inequality in the job market in tourism section of Islamic societies is apparent in statistics. Egypt is one of the top tourist destinations in North Africa. For example, in Egypt 14% of the workforce are female and the majority of the low-position jobs are occupied by women. 90% of sectorial jobs are held by women (Ibrahim et al., 2007). Women are under the control of “male guardians”. They must follow the guidance of men inside the family. “Delays after the regular working day, traveling away from home on business trips or dealing with people whom I don’t know” the greatest challenges of Egyptian women that they experience in tourism market (Ibrahim et al., 2007:296).

A female Egyptian describes the view of men and limitations of women who would like to work in this industry: “No Egyptian husband accepts that his wife returns home late at night, travels away from home for business purposes, or establishes business relationships with other men unless he fully understands the nature of business she is involved in” (Ibrahim et al., 2007:297). It is a common experience in different countries.
Sexualized Body: Veiling or Unveiling? Movement in Masculine Society

Unveiling is not a problem in the western context in the tourism industry, but in most of the Islamic countries, women’s employment should follow the Hijab. Iran among Islamic countries has the strongest official Islamic dress codes; walking in the streets with uncovering hair is a crime. Recently, an Iranian journalist, Masih Alinejad, supplied a space on Facebook-My Stealthy Freedom- to protest against compulsory hijab. A woman in Iran (Persia) wore a veil before Islam (Ibrahim et al., 2007), but the processes of veiling and unveiling of Iranian women in the recent decays have been controversial. Afsaneh Najmabadi in her book “Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards” (2005) mentions Fatima Mernissi (Moroccan sociologist) that the Islamic principle has been based on the assumption of an active female sexuality. She emphasizes that if active female sexuality “is not contained and controlled, this powerful force would cause social chaos (fitna) and threaten men’s civic and religious lives. The veil and the closely related institutions of gender segregation are the mechanisms through which Muslim societies contain and control female sexuality” (Najmabadi, 2005:132).

Women challenges in job market have many similarities in the MENA region. Egypt is one of the most significant destinations in the North Africa. Veiled Egyptian women who are active in this profession deal with Hijab problem; “Some travel agencies refuse to employ veiled women, especially at the counter and in sales. However, veiled women may have better opportunities in the departments that do not have direct contact with clients” (Ibrahim et al., 2007:298). Tour guides have direct contact with tourists, so the agencies should pay attention to this position.

Ibrahim et al. (2007) clarify the double role of the veil in Islamic societies. On the one hand, it allows them movement and mobility in the conservative society and pushes the borders of women’s rights. On the contrary for another woman, hijab limits their personal freedom and in the modern world with comparison with developed societies veiling is not a fair treatment.

Role and Workplace Expectations

“A role is a set of connected behaviors, rights, obligations, beliefs, and norms as conceptualized by actors in a social situation” (Kumar et al., 2013:6). Tour guides as holders of pioneer role in a patriarchal society are defined by a set of role expectations, besides these, the role perceptions are vital. “Role perception means what the actor himself thinks is required of him in the office” (Kumar et al., 2013:7). Tour guides pay attention to the surrounding people, especially to “significant others”. “This concept, which is derived from the Meadian theory of the self, highlights the ability of social actors to take the role of others…. Significant others are those who have an important influence or play a formative role in shaping the behavior of another” (Marshall, 1998:601).
Research Methodology

Stewart (1994 in Lapan et al., 2012) in the study of lives of women focuses on the relations among Power, identity, and social roles in the women’s life story. He advises seven guidelines for researchers of women’s life stories:

1. “Look for what has been left out,
2. Analyze their own roles and positions as they impact understanding the research process,
3. Identify women’s agency in the midst of social constraint,
4. Use gender as an analytic tool,
5. Be sensitive to the ways in which gender defines power relationships,
6. Identify other significant elements of an individual’s social position, and
7. Be suspicious of psychological perspective that stem from experiences of the male elite” (Lapan et al., 2012:128-129).

According to Lapan’s recommendations using gender as an analytic tool forms a new understanding about women’s experiences in everyday life. “Perception” is the key word of three research questions of this study. I am to explore female tour guides’ perception about empowerment that has not been investigated. So, it needs to understand how the participants think and how they see their situation. Hence, the objectives of the research and the nature of the information that the research aims to make available are determinant to choose qualitative research method.

In this study, in-depth interview is chosen because it investigates subjects which are profoundly rooted in the personal experience of tour guides as specialists. It is also, a complex and delicate subject to figure out their perception of their job and their opinion of the effects of their job on improving their empowerment. During interviews, these women uncover their perceptions, opportunities, and restrictions of this job situation. Data collected by interviews can be informative and elaborative; therefore the interview seems the best-fitted method to provide information about this new subject. Through the interview, an interaction between the researcher and the participants occurs and the researcher is involved in generating data in order to provide information for research purposes. This kind of data allows participants to describe the personal or organizational contexts that are very effective in figuring out their situation and can clarify the circumstances in which they work. Moreover, such data offers a full picture consisting of detailed and accurate information about women empowerment. This allows the participants to describe and explain and articulate their own meanings and interpretations and help the researcher find out their perception. The advantage of interview is that it is "founded on the belief that participants are individuals who actively construct their
social worlds and can communicate insights about it verbally…. interview is an effective method of qualitative data collection" (Ritchie and Ormston, 2014: 55).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis consists of “core skills” of different qualitative research methods while researchers did not reach a consensus on that it considered as a method. This form of analysis is a method for “identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006:79). The key word in this definition is “theme”. So clarifying and explaining this keyword is essential here. “a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun and Clarke, 2006:82).

Dependency and independency on theory and epistemology divides all qualitative methods into two camps (Braun and Clarke, 2006). “Thematic content analysis” searches for themes and patterns. “Theoretically-flexible Approach” is the best-fitted method for this study.

The extraction of themes happens by two primary ways: inductive / “bottom up” or deductive / “top down” way (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Inductive technique links directly to data without pre-existing frame. It is “data-driven” form while in the theoretical view the frames based on theories direct the researcher to catch the themes. The second way is “analyst-driven” form (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

I found thematic analysis with inductive or bottom up view flexible and more accessible form for application in this study. I wish to provide a rich overall description of the predominant or significant themes.

**Sampling**

The appropriate population is women tour guides that can shed light on research questions. In addition, the men tour guides are included in the inquiry because of their views and experiences. A suitable sample can be selected and recruited snowballing. While many individuals have a permission to work, they are not active as tour guides, so it was preferred to choose the snowball technique to find tour guides who are active. The way was that one tour guide was asked to provide the names of other actors. The process was started by finding two seeds to interview and continued by identifying people in a chain. In qualitative methodology the selection of inception points must be motivated from a strategic selection consideration and in this case one seed is selected from Tehran, the capital city, where many female tour guides are active in outgoing and incoming tours, while the other seeds are from Shiraz which is a popular destination for domestic and international tourists.

The strategy has been used primarily as a response to overcome the problems of finding active tour guides. It was also a suitable way of persuading informant tour guides to
participate in the research. A snowball sample is a non-probability sampling technique that is proper for being used in the research when the members of a population are not easy to find.

On the other hand, as snowball sampling is not a representative sample, it is mainly used for exploratory purposes, and it is not expected to generalize results. In fact, for exploration and in-depth study, it is an efficient method to refer to specialists introduced by their colleagues. Diversity of the sample is considered as another disadvantage of snowball sampling. There are some solutions to mitigate this such as asking participants to identify people dissimilar to them who are not their members of families or close friends while meeting the criteria (Ritchie et al., 2014). As far as it is related to this study, the tour guides who were interviewed had been identified by the mediation of their colleagues who did not have time to interview because of their intensive occupation during the high season. This leads to support an acceptable diversity of sample.

**Interviews**

The interviews started by two seeds, but the chain continued from one seed. These two seeds are my tour guides friend who are presently active. 15 persons were asked to interview while 7 interviews were done in the first phase. The interviews took about 17 days -from 23th April to 9 May 2015- to be carried out completely. The time differed from one to another. The shortest time was about 21 minutes, and the longest 67 minutes. In the next phase, the interviews continued to reach a saturation point within 15 days in October 2015. The sample comprises 10 female and 5 male tour guides who participated in the research.

The themes and main topics of the interviews consisted of the interviewees’ background (age, sex, education, marital status, and work experience), job satisfaction, social relationships (colleagues, family, friends, and relatives), tourist industry problems, significant others’ opinions (tourists, colleagues, managers, and family), and job qualifications. There were four research questions about female tour guides, male tour guides, their families, and tourists’ perceptions. Families and tourists’ perception were derived from tour guides point of view.

All the interviews were undertaken in Persian, recorded, and then transcribed and translated to English. To be sure that the translated texts were exactly the same as what had been said in interviews, they were checked by my friend. Fifteen interviews were transcribed. For a systematic analysis of 56800 words derived from transcribed interviews, I applied open code 4.03. OpenCode 4.03 is “a tool for coding qualitative data generated from interviews, observations, or field notes. It has been developed to specifically follow the first steps of the Grounded Theory methodology” (Dahlgren et al., 2007:169). However, this version can as well be used for Qualitative Content Analysis for classifying and sorting any kind of qualitative text information. This program is built by the department of public health and clinical medicine of Umeå University.
The following table illustrates some of the main characteristics of the interviewees of this study. The youngest respondent is 22 years old while the oldest is 45 years old. Ten participants are female and the rest are male. Eight tour guides are single and seven of them are married. The highest level of work experience of 15 years and the lowest is one year. The diversity of education of the sample is high. Most of the disciplines belong to social and human sciences, but tour guides who have a degree in biology and computer science exist in the sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Almost 3 years</td>
<td>BA in financial management and student in Arabic literature</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>One year and 6 years as host in ‘Couchsurfing’</td>
<td>BA in training science</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Female</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>MA in sociology and student in BA in law</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Male</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>MA in commercial management, insurance branch</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Female</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>HND in tourism BA in public relations MA in geography and tourism planning.</td>
<td>married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Male</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>the tour guide courses</td>
<td>married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Male</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>BA in English literature.</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Male</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>MA in renovation of historic building in Italy</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Female</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>MA in geography and tourism planning</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Male</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>MA in English translation</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Female</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>MA in The English language</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Empirical Considerations

Since the participants were geographically far, the Internet was the medium to connect to them to conduct the interviews online. In the first phase, the interviews were conducted in spring and the high season for the tourism industry. As a result, finding tour guides who had free time for the interview was tough. Generating sample was time consuming, because we had to wait for the participants to respond and introduce other colleagues and we had few options to arrange an interview at the same time. In other words, as a result of choosing snowball sampling, it was impossible to make an alternative for a particular time, because the participants were unknown until they were determined by the previous interviewee. Moreover, the problems of the Internet speed rate and prohibition of using some applications such as Facebook and Skype had to be solved in advance. However, it is common solution to use anti-filtering programs for Iranians. Skype was the best-fitted media to connect despite the low speed of the Internet. In two cases Viber application was more convenient to use for the respondents. Thanks to the Internet, the connection had no cost for the researcher or the respondents.

Using the online method has advantages in conditions involving busy interviewees, scattered sample and budget, and timetables that do not allow the travel. Particularly, in this case, participants were from different cities (Tehran, Shiraz, Ardebil, and Bandar-e- Abbas), busy on their working days (in travel), and also the timetable is a more important determinant for carrying this method out.

Ethical Consideration

Major ethical issues in conducting research are “informed consent, beneficence-do not harm-, respecting the privacy, respecting the anonymity and confidentiality” (Marianna,
The respondents of this study before the interview have been informed about aims and purpose of research. It is not dangerous to participate and answer the questions because of non-sensitive matters; albeit considering the ethical principle is the essential part of each research. The role of the researcher is to ensure that the confidentiality of conversation and anonymity are considered. Reassurance about confidentiality encourages the participants to talk about potentially sensitive information (Ritchie, 2003). In addition, it is essential to emphasize that the interview is to be recorded and the data would be just used for scientific purpose. Every interview begins with the following statement.

Before starting the interview, I would like to introduce my research project to you. I am a master’s student in Tourism in Umeå University. The intention is to investigate the incoming and outgoing tour guides’ problems and difficulties in Iranian tourism industry, by focusing on female tour guides. You have been chosen by chance. Based on “snowball sampling”, your colleagues introduce you for this study.

I want to inform you the interview will be recorded for better analyses and all replies will be treated with complete confidentiality. If you do not like to participate in this study you can finish our conversation for any reason.
Results and Discussions

The results of this analysis have 83 codes and 4 syntheses/categories as clarified in the table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Syntheses/categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Dislike routinized activities, take a risk, off-road experience, patient and conservative personality, break the norms, change the family’s opinion, easy-going, charismatic, attractive and friendly features, have a lot of friends, active in organizational and volunteer activities, tolerance, hard-working, make experience enjoyable, ability to control unexpected situations, language skills, entrepreneurship characteristics, part-time job, addictive activities, kind behavior, attract trust, have a professional ethics, reliable person, responsible characteristic, be patient, talkative person, live and work alone far from home and family, be creative, enriching knowledge and experiences, financial management, manage a group, contact with different cultures and style of life, finding solution, familiar with tourists’ needs, communication and convincing skill, careful about details</td>
<td>Role perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Problem management, lack of syndicate teamwork, lack of professional ethics, lack of infrastructures, political fluctuations, lack of training, local tour leader problems, lack of trust among tour guides tourists and sellers, economic situation and tourism job market problems, financial problems between agency and tour leaders, lack of insurance and social security, fluctuation in salary, stressful job, salary discrimination in tour guiding, demanding foreign tourists, bargaining power of men, no encouragement, make fun of female tour guide, juveniles domestic tourist behavior, too young to work, benefit of male tour guides for agencies, acceptance of lower income, early retirement because tiredness</td>
<td>Workplace; Challenges of female tour guides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Father’s justification for limitations for study far from home, father and husband reactions, husband’s justification for work, father and family and relatives reactions, husband’s justification and reaction, father’s denial decision for new job and his justifications, brother’s position, father’s permission for work in Iran, Father’s permission for work, father’s background, conservative behavior in job, beauty in job market, tour guide as a sexual partner, marriage as a turning point, family opinion, family discouragement for this job, her husband’s family limitation</td>
<td>Family perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Foreign tourist opinion, Iranian tourist opinion, manager of tourism agencies’ opinion and behavior, Iranian female tourists’ reactions, Iranian male tourists’ reactions, male colleagues opinion</td>
<td>Significant others’ opinions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Role Perceptions and Expectations

Challenges between role expectation and perception are described here in details:

Empowering the personality is the first and most important part of the empowerment process. Traditional and patriarchal views about women bring along a weak and vulnerable personality for them. The ranges of multiple capacities are developed by this job. Highly positive perceptions exist in female tour guides about their personality.

Tour guiding has a strong influence on the participants’ personality. Being social, resistant, adventurous, patient, and conservative are main characteristics of this job. The first step in empowering women in the field of tourism industry happens in their personality.

Travelling with a group of people and reaching the destination form their values. Some tour guides define themselves as easygoing people (respondent 5 and 7). They do not easily get upset in an unpleasant situation and have tolerance about unexpected conditions. If they want to follow rigid rules, managing the group of people would be impossible.

Another theme in this part is charismatic and attractive features; tour guides for better management of tourists need power for controlling and guiding a group of people. This feature connects to leadership characteristics of tour guides. It is obtained through excellent communication and interpersonal skills. Sometimes tour guides spend as long as one month with the tourists. They should consider how they interact with travelers to have them on their side.

They have lots of friends (resp. 5). As a result of connecting with different people, they have lots of friends. Sometimes management of this huge number of connections is difficult for them. Their friends accuse them of being disloyal (resp. 3).

One of the aspects of the social personality of the interviewees was taking parts in voluntary and unpaid work for shaping the syndicate of tour guides (resp. 5, 9, 10, and 12). They are not only a mere member, but also play the role of a founder (resp. 5) and as CEO of the provincial branch (resp. 9). Most of them spend their time in the syndicate during the low season, but one of the interviewees (resp. 10) said that he works in this occupation as a part-time job on order to participate in the syndicate for supporting other tour guides.

Relationship management among several passengers is crucial; they make closer friendship with a few of them. When they go back home, tourists still keep sending messages to them, but they don't have enough time to answer all of them. Female tour guides don't even intend to become too intimate with clients. Tourists think they are not very friendly, but these
are the characteristics they have obtained from their occupation. Travel with different people gives them the chance to have lots of relationships; this job improves the skill of communication. Intimate relationships with various people are challenging so they could afford to manage different connections, so they should have control of emotions and feelings. “My Iranian friends say, "You are a disloyal friend." I say, "This is because of my job" (resp. 3, female).

It is expected from them to have greater tolerance for diverse norms and values of this job. They respect different viewpoints indeed. A participant explains the paradoxical situation. Antalya is a sun-and-beach destination in turkey that religious travelers usually do not visit, but when she deals with these customers, she can handle well. “A prejudiced religious person comes to Antalya, but I must learn to handle them as a female tour leader, regardless of their beliefs and culture” (resp.1, female).

The attractiveness of tour guiding makes the shape of their personalities and interests. They become addicted to this job “This occupation is addictive indeed; you can't leave it easily, even if your living conditions are far from that-your first priority is leading tours” (resp.9, female).

They use a particular expression for their intensive work in high seasons: “back-to-back tours”. If they accept this kind of tours after that duration, they must rest for a long time to recover their energy. If someone has 3 months of back-to-back tours, they can't continue anymore. They need a break. This situation is much worse when the infrastructures are not sufficient. “You wake up every day at 6:00 and stay up until 12: 30 or 1:00AM, 3 months of hard work makes you exhausted indeed, especially if you are married” (resp.10, male).

They miss most of their family relationships during the tours. Getting the right work-life balance can be difficult. “When you get to the hotel, you need to check in the tour and this takes until 8:00PM-that means having 12 hours of non-stop activity for the whole day” (resp. 7, female).

Sometimes don't agree to handle long tours: “Last week I saw an old tour-guide in Kashan. He said, "I don't accept long tours anymore. I don't go away for more than a week. I only go to normal paths."(resp. 14, female)

Age is a dominant factor in accepting the tours. Because of the hard-working essence of this job, they reduce their occupation during their work life. “Maybe I stick to cultural tours after the age of 45. A few female tour guides are 50 years old now. They prefer to take only cultural tours without many adventures.” (resp. 13, female)

Presentation of information is one of the primary responsibilities for a tour guide. Everybody can gain information about historical places from the internet. The quality of this performance influences on tourists’ satisfactions. “My duty is not only sharing information. My principal responsibility is letting the visitors enjoy their tour. From such a standpoint, you won't get bored with this occupation.” (resp. 7, female)

Travel is full of unprecedented and unpredictable events. Ability to manage these conditions is a necessary qualification for this job. “One of Ms. Beheshti's tourists got food poisoned. She stayed in hospital till 2 AM, while she had to handle the rest of the group at 4:00 AM [...] you feel afraid, but you do it, and you gain self-confidence.” (resp.7, male)
Travel has a lot of changeable situations; tour guides must find a solution for those times: “We know how to find solutions in the hardest conditions. We can't say "Impossible!" Suppose we take them on a tour, but an unprecedented event spoils the plan. We have to find an alternative solution immediately. We never say "I can't."” (resp. 1, female)

Taking responsibility in these conditions for female tour guides is a part of the process of empowerment. “I have managed many cases of crisis for my tours. My male colleagues could not even think of the solutions I found.” (resp. 3, female)

Expectations are changing, and this job has shaped new norms and values for the women who are engaged as tour guides: “I had to solve the problems that would never be my responsibility as a lady in a normal family. Such experiences have made me rough.” (resp. 5, female)

Communication with different tourists needs language skills. The successful tour guide has an excellent second language. Managers are mostly sensitive about language skills. Agencies and market encourage tour guides to learn non-English languages. “They pay more to the tour guides who speak German, French, or Chinese. Mainly, Chinese speaking guides are most wanted. ..Their salaries are two or three times as much as regular guides.” (resp. 15, female)

She considers her achievements when narrating the story of the entrance to this job. Her entrepreneurship started in the small city and now she works in The EU as a tour guide: “I was the only lady next to 4 men... our efforts resulted in receiving an office in the International Sheikh Safi Museum... gradually, we were known by different tourism agencies in Ardebil. They asked us to guide their tours. We started with local tours and then incoming tours. Finally, we worked with outgoing tours as well.” (resp. 15, female)

The essence of group management and controlling other people forms the quality of behavior in this occupation. “A mother is very similar to being a tour guide. We are so kind to them that even senior citizens in their 80s will follow us.” (resp. 9, female)

Tourists have to trust in the goodness of the tour guide during the travel. Without this quality, managing the clients is unimaginable: “Your behavior, actions, and reactions need to be very careful so to attract their trust. Our decisiveness and decision-making abilities should assure the passengers about our capability.” (resp. 9, female)

Having patience helps them to continue this job. Working and staying a long time in this field make them patient. Indeed, it is a mutual relationship: “I don't really know whether I have stood in this business because I was patient, or I have become patient because I have worked in this business. I think it is a kind of synergy.” (resp.5, female)

She insists on the importance of this quality as a female tour guide: “A female tour guide is kinder and more patient because she has a maternal instinct.” (resp. 9, female)

Being a tour guide has its own life span. You can do it only when you are fully fresh and energetic: “You need to be patient. When a tour guide starts grumbling and complaining, that means their tour guide life is over.” (resp. 9, female)
This occupation has some unpleasant side effects. Talking a lot is mentioned by one of the participants: “They become a bit talkative as well. They like to talk a lot. My friends sometimes raise the joke: "Turn off your tour-guiding switch. You are not the guide here. Don't be as talkative as a magpie".” (resp. 14, female)

An abnormal condition that is common in this job is working during the holidays: “They have to keep traveling in all holidays while their families don't go to vacations. This is particularly hard for the ones who are dependent on their families.” (resp. 7, male)

Travel has become part of their routine style of life. They get routinizing activities by improving the quality of their tours: “We visit a few cities more than the others. In each city, I should hold a different tour. Not every tour shall be the same as the one before. I try to improve the quality of my tours.... I have to study a lot.” (resp. 14, female)

They have to deal with a vast group of travelers in a short period of time. The skill of managing a group can help them to handle this situation well. They must understand which person attends which tour and which person does not like it: “The minimum requirement is trying to learn their names... I must be able to find the parents of every child...The details are beyond first and last names. I should be able to analyze their psychology and mentality... Dissatisfied travelers should be pleased. A few individuals need more care than the others.” (resp. 3, female)

Being familiar with diverse cultures is one of the interesting parts of this job for some of the tour guides (resp. 2, 4, 5, 7, 12, and 14): “Travel is the experience of new food, new music, new wind, and new weather; you meet new people-every person is like a world” (resp. 7, male). All such connections and relations “Strengthen our soul and open our minds” (resp. 12, female).

Huge Face-to-face connections with tourists form their personalities as easy going and friendly people: “If you send me to a 1000-person crowd, after an hour I make at least 3 intimate friends from among them, I connect with all of them, and I become their focal point of attention” (resp. 5, female).

The common feature of women is being careful about details. This quality is an advantage for employees in this occupation: “A few agencies ask for female tour guides only, because the ladies are more careful” (resp. 13, female).

In addition, they point out these qualities for employees in this part of tourism industry: be creative (resp. 5), a responsible character (resp. 10 and 13), a reliable person (resp. 10), have professional ethics (resp. 9), financial management (resp. 5) and familiar with tourists’ needs (resp. 3, 6, 7, 9, and 14).

The person whose job is traveling can't stay in one place. Most of them mention that they dislike routine activities (resp. 1, 5, 7, 12, and 14). One of the tour guides says banking is the worst job in the world because they have to do a repetitive work for the whole life without any variety. She could not live with such a job for a long time (resp. 12). Another one says she finds going to school at 8:00 AM and coming back in the afternoon boring. “My mother asked the school authorities to let me go out whenever I liked, because she knew I would quit my high school if she did not do this” (resp. 5, female). She was obviously a studious teenager.
that encourages one to make such a request.

They have very distinctive attitudes to work that cause them to enter this field. They sometimes like “taking risks” (resp. 7) and then forget about stable lives and conditions.

One of the signs of an adventurous personality is accepting unusual duties. Off-road tours are the best example. “Off-roading is the activity of driving or riding a vehicle on unsurfaced roads or tracks, made of materials such as sand, gravel, riverbeds, mud, snow, rocks, and other natural terrain”(Wikipedia, 2016, Retrieved 23 January 2016). Indeed, this kind of tour is not usual for female tour guides, and it is tough to be an off-road tour guide:

“It’s actually a masculine task, but I accompany them, because I have written the itinerary myself... The experienced male tour guides for off-road tours don’t know the principles of business... Right now, no lady in Iran goes to off-road tour except for me. They don’t like to accompany a gang of men in dessert and far places. They prefer cultural tours” (resp. 13, female).

She describes her first experience: “People were surprised. They could not believe why a lady is guiding 20 men. In tomorrow’s tour, there are 13 men. I am the only lady with them” (resp. 13, female)

Workplace, Vulnerability of Female tour guides

Tourism industry in Iran is more vulnerable because it is in the pre-industry situation and needs a standard policy of development. Participation in unstable situations has a strong influence on their perceptions. Fights with unequal conditions make them stronger than normal women who are living in Iran. Interviewees report a range of these susceptibilities.

It depends on the agency and tour guide, but when they get to know each other, they don't sign contracts anymore. Of course, they have contracts, but most of the contracts are verbal: “They just tell me the date, and I handle the tour. They give me some ready cash for the tour costs. They don't even ask me for a receipt. When I return, I report the financial costs, and I receive my salary. A few of my friends had to argue a few months for receiving their payment.”(resp. 14, female)

Accommodation is the biggest problem. There is a shortage of hotels and hostels in wide national scales. The speed of growth and development of touristic accommodation is not sufficient: “Local houses are rented in Kashan, but Esfahan never allows that. I think that makes sense, because local houses cannot provide enough security.”(resp. 10, male)

Middle-East issues have been much discussed in the international media. The negative media imagination of this region influences most of the destinations: “Syria attacks another country, and ISIS starts its activities in other countries, but our tourism industry goes slack.”(resp. 7, male)
Many economic and political factors are influential in this market. The SARS in the southeast of Asia or terrorist attack of 9/11 in the west resulted in a reduction of the tourism market in Iran and the whole middle-east region: “The US attack on Afghanistan, Iraq war, and many other issues made the region insecure. We suffered many embargos.” (resp. 15, female)

Undesirable aspects of Refugee crises in Turkey effect outgoing tour guides. Many companies hire untrained guides to boost their sales: “Many companies hire Iranian refugees with the lowest prices. They are satisfied with such employees, but they have no knowledge or responsibility about tourists.” (resp. 3, female)

Agencies do not hire local tour guides in typical situations. They need to impose a law for supporting their position: “In Turkey, the only permitted persons are allowed to work as tourist guides... The police will arrest you. This is true about Rome as well. You can't guide more than 6 people. You must hire a local guide from that country.” (resp. 5, female)

German tourists are guide-book oriented. The role of guides is in crises in this situation: “They all have a damn guide handbook in their hands. I wonder who has written the handbook.” (resp. 11, female)

In some countries, tour guides receive some commission from sales, so some of them encourage foreign tourists to shop at particular markets. In this condition, it is hard to trust the tour guides. Passengers try to be dishonest with them and buy something secretly. She describes an experience about misunderstanding of the situation: “When a tourist guide is walking in Esfahan with a few foreign passengers, the shops suddenly attack them, "Please! Please come to our shop and buy the best products". Once a lady did not accept to go to their shop, but the shopkeeper had a big quarrel with her. The shopkeeper started insulting her. They said, "All the tourist guides are thieves. They only take the passengers to the shop that gives them some percentage of the sale". That lady cried in the street.” (resp. 11, female)

Minimum salaries have been assigned by the Tour-Guides' Federation since 2 years ago, but not all agencies follow that minimum. This problem is even worse when guides work in foreign countries: “I started my occupation with a Turkish agent 7 years ago. They gave me 500$ a month constantly. Together with the prime benefits, it went to 1000 or 2000$ a month...The rise in USD value is reduced my constant salary to 300$... Although my employer is not an Iranian company, and Turkey has not had any currency change, they take advantage of Iran's condition. This is kind of abuse.” (resp.3, female)

Many of them don't care about experience and reputation: “They don't care about the 15 years of experience I had. They don't think of the difference between my work quality and the quality of newcomers. They don't pay me higher than the new starters.” (resp.11, female)

One guide concludes “We have to provide our tourists with world-class services, but we are not paid with world-class fees.” (resp.11, female)

“Insurance policies” did not cover tour guides for a long time. Recently, it was recognized as a job: “After 15 years of working, I am not different from a housewife who has not worked at all... I could retire in the next 5 years if I had a retirement account. But I don't have even a single day of insurance reputation.” (resp. 5, female)
The Social Security Organization said, "We can only insure you if you have a known job. For example, if you prove you are a driver, but we can't insure a guide. This is not a job." (resp. 15, female)

There is no fixed salary or income in this occupation. Optional activities during a package of tour increase the guide’s income. “My colleagues sometimes earn 3000 Euro from one tour, but I earn only 500 Euro from the same tour because I am not a good optional-seller.” (resp. 5, female)

After a few visits, professional tourists learn the environment thoroughly: “They don't need tour-leaders after a few visits. This has reduced our income over the last two years.” (resp. 1, female)

The regular retirement age is too early: “A few days ago, a male tour leader told me, "We can't work for a long period. I have come across muscle pains”. We have to walk 9 or 12 hours a day. Walking long hours is hard. Everybody thinks we will quit at the age of 45 at most”. (resp. 13, female)

Some of the participants add the different varieties of problems of the tourism industry such as management problems (resp. 10, 15), Lack of syndicate teamwork (resp.10, 11, and 15) inadequate road toilets (resp. 13).

Some sorts of challenges lie ahead of female tour guides. Patriarchal structure of the society shapes the job market of tourism. The cost of empowerment is not cheap. Participation in male-dominated environments causes many problem and difficulties. Lists of challenges are emphasized below:

This is a high-stress occupation: “Working under high-tension conditions make us bored and tired in the long run.”(resp. 5, female)

Men have higher negotiation ability. They try to get more benefits for their cooperation. The agency accepts to pay higher salaries to men more quickly than women. A tour guide who also manages an agency describes her experiences: “a very excellent French-speaking lady is paid 200 thousand Tomans a day, but the man who is not as good as her in French and is not as much responsible might ask for 250 thousand Tomans a day. In such cases, I might accept to pay higher to male guides because if I don't pay them enough, they cut the corners of the tour and they keep complaining.”(resp. 13, female)

If the tour is a gang of young boys in the bus in domestic tours, the female tour guide might have some troubles: “They might make fun of her or crack ugly jokes.”(resp. 10, male)

This is the advantage of male tour leaders for agencies that “Agencies who have separate tour guide from the driver prefer to hire a male tour guide, because they can get the same room for both of them. When the tour guide and driver have the same room, they pay a lower rent.”(resp. 5, female)

An alone Woman with the ability to move freely in the working environment may be potentially suitable for some suggestions. She behaves in a conservative way to protect herself from sexual harassment.

“I have never been bothered by the young boys who understand I am a single girl
working and living alone in a foreign country. They don't expect me to become their pleasure partner. I have kept the borders very well.” (resp. 3, female)

Misunderstanding of the situation and responsibilities of tour guides do not limit to Iranian tourists. The conversation between a foreign tourist and a female guide shows the prevalence of stereotype even in western countries. A respondent states that:

“Not only Iranians, but also foreigners think that a lady who is free to go abroad can accept such suggestions as well... An old [Swedish] man at the age of 76 asked me, "What is the meaning of the lipstick you have used?" I said, "I don't want my face to look pale when I become tired." He said, "If you use this lipstick when you are by the side of your husband that means your husband wants to show your beauty. But when you use the lipstick while you are alone, that means you like to attract other men". I was shocked indeed by what he said” (resp. 12, female)

Body Control with hijab happens inside the country, but on the outside they also are not free to choose their clothes. Respondent A said all the tourist agencies in Turkey ask them to take off their veil. It is a contradictory condition, working inside or outside of the country; both of them have rules for controlling the body of women.

The country’s economic problems have led outgoing tourists to find new cheap destinations. A participant who works in turkey describes her personal difficulties in managing this kind of request:

“They have already seen Thailand... In Thailand, you can ask your tour guide to become your sexual partner as well. They offer two services at a time. The person, who has already visited Thailand, might have the same expectation from their tour leader in Turkey. If the tour guide greets them openly, they jump into such wrong conclusion. {...} We should show them this is not true. We don't have such recreations here.” (resp. 3, female)

In addition, participants consider these challenges for females tour guides: “too young to work” (resp. 2) and Acceptance of lower income (resp. 4).

Family

Before Marriage

Family is the first agency of socialization and internalization of roles, norms, and values in each society. Gender socialization starts even before the birth of the baby. When the parents learn that their kid is a girl or a boy, the way they talk to that embryo change to a stereotyped talking. Intimate relationships within the family make the acceptance of sexist ideas and internalization of roles easier. As the result of this socialization which prefers the girls stay more inside the house than outside, girls, who wish to have a job, would convince their
parents to let them work. If these jobs are not traditionally feminine, they will have a big challenge with their families to get the permission. Tour guiding is one of those traditionally masculine jobs which women tackle these days and should argue with their families to let them go for the job. It does not have a well-established position in the job market, and it is not well-known in the society, so families do not agree with girls’ decision easily: “My father and mother did not like me to work as a tour-guide at all. Since I was a studious student, they liked me to study at prestigious fields such as medicine.” (resp. 11, female)

Having a Job would end up to economic and social independence. Girls feel freer of the pressure of their families who want to dictate them their own rules and culture. This precious independence helps them to choose their own lifestyle: “All tour guides have problems with one of the parents or family members. That is why they like to stay away from their families.” (resp. 5, female)

“Even when I wanted to go mountain climbing with my friends at the age of 23 or 24, I needed to have my mother's permission. If she said "No," I could not go.” (resp. 3, female)

Conservative families find themselves in a challenging situation when their girls want to choose tour guiding as a career which needs many traveling and is still in the domination of males. It is undeniable that families’ support is one of the crucial key to the job achievement of their kids, but the fact is that the younger the girls are, the more the families worry and are reluctant to support them: “I went on my first trip alone in 1377 (2009) when I was 16 years of age. My family did not like me go on trips alone as a 16-year-old girl..... They tried to prevent me, but they couldn't.” (resp. 5, female)

Public space has been dominated by men for centuries and in some parts of the world, the men cannot share that with the women easily. Patriarchal societies like Iran with defined roles for the two sexes affect the families’ decision or parent’s permission for their daughters’ choice for a job. Sexual discrimination idea that girls are weaker, more vulnerable, and more sensitive than boys, leads parents to disagreement with the decision of their daughters for being a tour guide, and in the best way they agree with that as a part time job: “If I work part-time, my family has no problem. If I want to work as a driver-guide or country-wide tour-guide, my family will not accept easily”. (resp. 11, female)

Jobs which are traditionally feminine like nursing or teaching and those which are traditionally masculine like being an engineer or builder are still more acceptable. These facts are not invisible in the eyes of parents who care more about their daughter than their boys. This concern is more about the honor of their daughters, which is the honor of whole family, than about their success in their favorite career. Some families never end up disapproving this job as a real career even for their boys: “My family has not yet accepted this business as my permanent. {…} All my family members think this is only an additional job, not the main one.” (resp. 8, male)

Unexpected consequences of sanction and economic recession in Iran make the families less tough towards the conception of “breadwinner”. Men who were supposed to be the breadwinners of the family cannot anymore take care of their responsibilities alone and expect
that women help them. They prefer not to advertise this demand and in silence let the women be the second breadwinner of the family. They don’t want to admit that they can be as good as them in this role: “Their incomes are helpful to the family. The only thing that makes their families allow them is the financial gain. If the income was lower, they would not be allowed to do the job.” (resp. 11, female)

Some families don’t have economic problems and on the pretext that this job does not have good income, don’t let their daughters take this job, so most of the girls fail to enter the job market because their parents do not need their money: "You should have a job with good income." Fortunately, right now we have good income.” (resp. 10, male)

Different experiences, opinions, justifications, and behaviors between fathers/brothers and husbands are narrated by female tour guides. The reactions of men in their families about this job depend on their generation. Men’s attitudes have definitely changed for the better since women are married. Some fathers just mention their disagreement about the job: “My father says, ‘Women should only work as teachers. They go straightly to school and come back’. He thinks my occupation is too hard” (resp. 11, female), but some of them prevent their daughters from working or actively involved in all aspects of this job.

One of the participants could not get a passport before marriage because she did not have the permission of her father which is a must for getting the passport for single unmarried women. After marriage, she get a chance to travel abroad: “After getting my passport, my first outgoing tour was to France. My husband was quite happy, because I was developing my occupation into outgoing tours. When my dad heard the news, he was shocked indeed and could not believe it. Even right now, he can't believe that my husband, Hamed, lets me go abroad alone” (resp. 9, female).

It is an extreme example that one girl would face in the family and more interestingly is to know that her father has studied and lived in the U.S. for four years. She thinks living in a small province causes such problems. If they lived in the capital city, her father would have changed his mind. At the beginning, her father had encouraged her to accept this job: “Many of my family members, relatives, and friends are really surprised when they hear about my job” (resp. 9, female).

It is also related to the typical expectations of women’s job in any generations. Teaching and working as a clerk in office are two examples of this stereotype about women’s occupation. It is weird in the web of the family relationships participation in such position.

“Nobody in our family had such a job before. Our previous generations were mostly teachers. The non-teacher relatives usually worked in an office environment as employees with routine and organized lives. It was surprising to them in the beginning, but they admire it presently” (resp. 14, female).

Disagreement of male members of the family against “tour guiding job” of female member of their own family does not extend to all families in this sample. Many families welcome the
decision of women; this victory would have not been achieved without the big effort of the female tour guides. However, working at night or traveling abroad are still the controversial issues within the family. Fathers’ reactions are different, some don’t like their daughters be outside at night, and some others don’t like them to travel abroad, and they justify it with saying that “you are my only daughter”: “We have a colleague who is not allowed to go to long travels. She can only work for the tours that let her go home at night. Her father does not permit her to stay far from home at night.” (resp. 8, male)

“You are my only daughter. You are single, and I can’t let you go abroad.” (resp. 9, female)

Our interviewees are mature enough to understand the concern of their families, especially when the matter is the question of security. The roads are unsafe and insecure and driver guides admit that: “They are concerned about my security. I agree with them on that. Long-term driving is a bit hard. The last time I took a tour, I was away for 3 weeks. {...} You know the dangerous conditions of driving in Iran. Many people prefer ladies to stay at home.” (resp. 11, female)

For some girls, as one of our respondents brings it up, father disagreement had already shown up when they were away for doing their university studies. Being away for a long period is not appreciated by the parents especially by the fathers.

Although the sound of the father is louder than that of other members in the family, but he may not be the only one; sometimes brothers play the father’s role: “The first time I had to travel abroad, I was worried that my brother would come to the airport in the last minutes and prevent me from going.” (resp. 3, female)

It is interesting and thought provoking when we encounter the male tour guide and he plays his role as a brother: “If I had a sister, I would not let her become a tour guide ... I believe that women are not well-treated in this field.”(resp. 5, female)

Another brother shows his disagreement towards this job by saying to her sister: "Please do not propose any of your friends or colleagues to me for marriage. I can't be like your husband who agrees with your job. I can't live with a tour guide woman. I want a housewife" (resp. 9, female)

Tour guides with their style of life show their resistance against the values and norms of the society. “Break the norms” (resp. 5 and 12) is the title that they use for defining the nature of this job. Living and working alone and far from the family removes the sense of dependency on the family in a hierarchal society. The importance of this kind of norm-breaking in traditional societies is evident.

In this research, husbands do not/cannot play the role of speed limiter in the family, but some fathers prevent their daughters from working as an outgoing tour guide (resp. 9) or force them to work just as local tour guides. One of the respondents describes the condition of his
colleague: “Her father does not allow her to stay far from home at night. He allows her to come back late at night, but he does not let her stay somewhere else at night.” (resp. 8, male)

“They try to change the family’s opinion after they gain a stable job position and sufficient income; they could change the family’s attitudes as well. And they did not face disagreement anymore” (resp. 7, female).

A participant’s father describes an Ideal job for his daughter. “My father says “women should only work as teachers. They go straightly to school and come back”. He thinks my occupation is too hard.” (resp. 11, female)

Some fathers find it difficult to express their disagreement directly: “You are my only daughter. You are single, and I can’t let you go abroad. After marriage, you can do whatever you like... If you go abroad once, you will like to go again and again” (resp. 9, female). The decision on whether she is allowed or not rests with her husband. His daughter interprets her father’s comments: "If she were married, she would be more restricted, so she would forget about that"(resp. 9, female).

After Marriage

The story gets more interesting when after marriage, the family-in-law appear as a new barrier for the occupation. The job of their daughter-in-law is not acceptable or approved for them: “When I got married, a new story started. My husband’s family doesn’t like my occupation.” (resp. 12, female)

They think when the wife is away, she cannot take care of her principal role as a “housewife” and a “mother” and the husband who is “their son” would be alone without having somebody to take care of him. Gender stereotypes are present everywhere and any time; it is not easy to get rid of them. Once more women face the new situation and should overcome the barriers to save her career and her independence. They should make a balance between their work and their family life—a challenge that a man would never face to: “My family in law can't tolerate when I am away for my job and their son is alone. This is hard for them. This is against their traditions.” (resp. 12, female)

This hard-starting in-law families getting better gradually as new arrivals don’t give up and challenge the norms and traditions of their previous generation. However, they have a long and hard path to move through and to improve themselves. It is a need to be a super-woman to make a balance between the career and the personal life: “When a girl arrives in a family, they might find it hard to let her behave against their norms. When she holds on to her job for 8 or 10 years, they will accept it.” (resp. 12, female)

Marriage leads to a transformation in family relationships. Women gain considerable
advantages and disadvantages in this new situation. After marriage, some of them cannot work anymore as fulltime tour guides, so they earn less and this is not pleasant for them. That is understandable why some of tour guides decide not to marry and improve instead in their career: “Since I am married, I have to work for half a month only. I don't work for the other half of month.” (resp. 11, female)

“I wouldn’t be able to be away for 2 or 3 months if I married. If my husband has the same position, I wouldn’t like him to be away for such a long period.” (resp. 3, female)

However, other opposite stories might happen as that of one of our respondents’. She gained her freedom after marriage and became an outgoing tour guide that she had ever whished, the situation that her father had withheld from her: “You are allowed to do whatever you like, after marriage!”. Now, my father would regret, because I can decide independently for whatever I want. I made many decisions with my husband, which is not pleasant to my dad at all.” (resp. 9, female)

Being a mother is not as easy as being a wife. It is a totally different story including many other responsibilities. Deciding for having a child should be thought of very carefully. Many times being a mother ends up in stopping jobs, or shifting to part time positions or switching to local tour guiding: “I have always worked as an outgoing guide, but now, as a mother, I want to work as a local guide in Tehran. It provides me to work 3 or 4 days a week in my own city on certain hours.” (resp. 5, female)

It is widely supposed that the child would force the mother to quit her job for a considerable time. After this period, finding a job in the competitive market would be extremely tough. The risk of not being able any more to work after having the child ends up to the decision of totally ignoring the temptation of being a mother or postpone it for a later time. The older they get, the more they worry about this delay of starting the period of their motherhood-once more a situation that men would never face. The conflict between choosing the improvement in their job or being a mother increases, and it seems women always sacrifices their professional life for being a good and caring mother. The gender norms, social pressure, traditions, the high value of being a mother in the Iranian society, the culture, and in its ever presenting religion which promises the heaven to the mothers, and one of the most important fact that is the lack of good, adequate, and economic daycares are the reasons that make this sacrifice understandable: “I am 33, and my husband is 35 years old. It's high time for us to bring a child, but I know I will lose my job for 5 or 6 years anyway... it will be hard indeed to find my current position again.” (resp. 11, female)

“I will not continue the incoming tours that might keep me 24 or 28 days away from home.” (resp. 9, female)

Lack of enough and good daycares transfers the responsibility of kids in the absence of their parents to the shoulder of the grandparents. Grandparents, most of the times are pleased to take care of their grandchildren, but taking care of kids would lead them to the new position of authority towards their sister-in low or their grandchildren which endangers the
independency of the family. They want to educate their grandchildren upon their own knowledge and traditions that is not what the parents want. Once more, mothers decide to give up their job to give a modern and reasonable education to their kids, the situation that is not even thinkable for a man, none of our respondents knew a man who gave up his work for raising his child: “In Shiraz his family might help me and I will work as a local guide in Shiraz. If his family helps me, I think I can work even after bearing a child.” (resp. 11, female)

Sometimes, even if the husband wants to help, he may not being trusted. Gender stereotypes make clear that men are not made for taking care of kids. They are not sensitive enough to understand the kids’ needs. This is naturally a woman’s role and this territory would be in danger with the interference of the masculine sex: “My husband says he will keep the baby, but I think it will be hard for him indeed. I can’t leave a 6-month-old baby for one week with the father, not even the 1-year-old and 3-year-old baby!” (resp. 12, female)

One of the male interviewees clarifies the main reason that married female tour guides are made to quit. They should take over responsibilities for this job; therefore, their family life suffers the consequences. They cannot play the role of a “buffer” in the family relations: “We become impatient and bored. We don’t have even the patience to call our spouse. Gradually, they become dissatisfied, and we won’t have the energy to calm them down.” (resp. 7, male)

**Who is a suitable partner for marriage?**

Marriage for tour guides and its consequences on their profession is always controversial. They keep asking themselves “who is the best partner?” According to their personal experiences in life and work, some believe it is better to marry somebody in the same filed, and some other are totally against this view and prefer to marry a man of different occupation who is more available to their kids. Some of them just can’t find the answer for this question and have to quit their job after marriage or after becoming a mother: “I prefer to marry someone who is in the same field, because we would understand each other better.” (resp. 10, male)

“After a few years, they plan to have a child, but they don’t know who is going to take care of him. Marrying a colleague is not recommended, unless they work in different fields.” (resp. 2, female)

Unmarried tour guide women can justify their situation as a single woman, by reasoning that they wanted to improve their job rather than having a family. It is not surprising in the small traditional cities when people keep asking why they are single or advise them that marriage is more important than a job for a woman. One of our 45-year-old respondents says: “This makes it easier for me to deal with them. If I say, "I am single", new questions shall rise. They might ask me ‘Why haven’t you married yet? ’. I don’t like to discuss such minor matters.” (resp. 14, female)

A recurrent theme in the interviews is a sense amongst married interviewees that their
husbands accept this position and always encourage them in everything they do: “When other people ask him why he allows me to continue this job, he says "She knows about and avoids the red lines; therefore, it's alright to me. She can be active in the society". His support encouraged me to continue the occupation.” (resp. 9, female)

Some respondents express the belief that this permission for participation in the job market is a result of the economic situation: “The husbands don't let them work far from home unless the income is attractive {...} For instance, the husband allows the wife to go to work for 1 or 2 years because they need to save some money.”(resp. 11, female)

Sometimes men agree with their wives on this issue, but they will have to suffer the consequences. There might be cases of the crisis in the high-season when husband expects her to stay by his side: “I know he prefers me to become the bank clerk I mentioned... I could have an organized life that way {...} his life becomes unorganized a bit. He becomes tired of doing all the housework {...} over the course of high-season; I might take many tours and stay at home for only 15 or 20 days. Those 3 months form a gap between us. When I come back home in the high-season, I feel I am a bit far from my husband... Additionally ... Suppose we want to move to a new house or we decide to paint our house. We can do such things only in summer, but I am away then. My husband remains alone.” (resp. 12, female)

After three years she has more challenges in her family life. It seems that adaptation to these conditions is too hard. She describes “crisis of masculinity” how it happened. Her husband needs to prove that letting his wife go away is not against being manly and masculine:

“I have travelled to the Europe many times, but my husband has not seen even one of the European countries. He can't have command such a wife. I think this is his biggest challenge, not having to cook food {...} He has two challenges. The first one is making himself accept the case. The second problem is making the others accept it... Both my husband and I have to struggle for proving that we have no problems. We sometimes get tired of struggling.” (resp. 12)

The above case is a good illustration of challenges of supporting female tour guides in the job markets by their husbands. Another tour guide without passport describes her husband support: “He wondered, "What kind of tour-leader are you? Can a tour-leader live without a passport? What does that mean?" I explained about my father's beliefs and the fact that I did not really need a passport so far. Next week, he applied for my passport.” (resp. 9)

The role and reaction of the husband in supporting his wife in this job is vital. Some interviewees state that their husbands always support them in their decisions and encourage them in their work to overcome all difficulties. However, it is not always easy for men to support their wives in the “stereotyped world” around them, where the roles and the place of women are considered more at home than outside of house. Below we can see 2 cases where the husband tries to support his wife:
“Whenever people blame him for letting me continue the job, he says "She knows what she is doing and she can be active in the society". His support encouraged me to continue the occupation. Interestingly, I could have my passport for outgoing tours after marriage. He signed the forms for me to get the passport. He was not happy that my father didn’t sign the papers while he knew that I needed the passport for my job. (resp. 9, female)

Thanks to my job, I have visited many European countries, while my husband has never been outside of the country. He cannot treat me like the boss saying “to do this or not to do that” like the other men treat their wives. I think this is a challenge for him to convince himself and also “significant others” to accept our situation and believe that we are good in this kind of like. Nevertheless, all these discussions and challenges are becoming so frustrating. (resp. 12, female)

However, some express that their husbands let them work just because of their bad economic situation. If they had enough money, he would prefer that she stayed home and did her traditional tasks of a house wife and mother. Once more, here, sexual divisions of work appear in the dialogue between husband and wife. Man confiscates the role of breadwinner for himself and lets his wife help him whenever he has a problem and cannot manage the economic situation in the household: “My husband wants me to work whenever we are in a bad economic situation.”(resp. 11, female)

In both cases, women feel guilty because of her absence in household. It is especially evident, in the high season of her work when she has to be more outside and the man should take care of the household chores by himself:

“I know he prefers me to become the bank clerk, I mentioned... I could have an organized life that way......his life becomes unorganized a bit. He becomes tired of doing all the housework....over the course of high-season; I might take many tours and stay at home for only 15 or 20 days. Those 3 months make a gap between us. When I come back home in the high-season, I feel a bit that we are like strangers... additionally ...suppose we want to move to a new house or we decide to paint our house. We can do such things only in summer, but I am away on those occasions. My husband remains alone.” (resp.12, female)

**Significant Others’ Opinions, Perceptions of Tourists and Colleagues:**

Those people who are of enough significance in an individual's life to influence the individual's personality, emotions, behavior, and sense of self-for example family and friends. Through interactions between tour guides and significant others and perceptions of their

---

3 In Iran a woman can have passport if her father or husband sign the “Consent Form”.
feedbacks of one's behavior, a tour guide gains a sense of who he or she is and comes to understand how to act in a particular context and role. Self-concept is based mainly on our perceptions.

Foreign and domestic tourists, male colleagues, and managers of agencies are “significant others” in this job markets.

**Foreign Tourists’ Opinions**

Iranian incoming tourists are a bit different from the incoming tourists of other countries. Their image of Iran is negative indeed. Since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the Europeans’ image about Iran is not so satisfactory. They always try to make the tourists aware of the reality: “2 or 3 weeks after their arrival, they say ‘Iran is one of the most beautiful countries in the world. You have very nice people’.” (resp. 6, male)

Two Swiss women tourists say "Many tourists come to my own country, but I have never told them 'Welcome to my country.' In Iran, from the very moment we got off the plane, everybody welcomed us... We felt very well... They greet the tourists and invite them to tea, coffee, or to their homes". (resp.6, male)

They think Iran is of a restricted society. When they see the freedom of Iranian women they stress: “Oh, we thought all Iranian women wear a burqa and a thick veil. We didn't think we would meet such open-minded women"(resp.8, male).

“What an alone traveler from Italy, whose 65-year-old father called every day and asked ‘Can you find food in Iran? Is it safe to go out of the hotel? Do they have any shops at all? Do they have any restaurants? ’ who had had not of course told him that the guide is a woman. In the 5th day, she said bravely, 'Father! My guide is an Iranian girl'. The father could not believe it. He said, 'How can an Iranian girl be your guide in Iran's conditions?'” (resp. 9, female)

She was influenced indeed when she saw a married woman is allowed to stay far from her family for 28 days in order to carry out her business: “My latest tourist was German. She asked me, "Do women drive in Iran? Are they allowed to wear jeans?" Then she saw herself that many women are driving. They found out that all the propaganda in the Western countries is a lie.”(resp. 10, male)

Some of the foreign tourists are often more demanding than the rest: “Most of them are aged, generally above 50! ... Formenrly, the Germans were among the best tourists, but I wonder why the new ones are mischievous. Maybe that is because they have lower budgets, and they are from lower economic classes.”(resp. 11, female)

Sometimes female tour guides are used to dealing with demanding customers. “Greeks are awful people. They keep grumbling about everything: ‘Why is my food not delicious? Why is my chair inconvenient? Why did we sit on the bench to eat dinner? I have lost something in the hotel’. I know a male tour guide could not deal with them. I assigned a lady. They did not
grumble a lot because they said to the woman ‘we know you can't solve our problem.’” (resp. 13, female)

Iranian Tourists' Opinions and Reactions

Iranian female tourists’ reactions to female tour guide are different. On certain occasions, they might rely on a male tour guide more than a female one: “Once I took a tour to the desert. The bus driver came too late at night. All the women came to me when they had any problem. None of them went to my female colleague.” (resp. 8, male)

When a female tour guide leads outgoing Iranian tourists, she reports her experiences as: “Some Iranians don’t like a woman to behave friendly with male colleagues, but the other ones consider her to be fruitful and capable.” (resp. 1, female)

And everybody is surprised. Husbands like a baby, need protection. In the traditional view, household duties must be the first priorities for women: “When we take Iranians abroad, during the first days, everybody remains silent because they are not sure about our abilities. Then they are influenced gradually... ‘Don't you bring your husband with yourself?’ This is the first question they ask or ‘Don't you travel with your husband?’ I answer to them, ‘Do you take your wives to your workplace?’” (resp. 9, female)

When the tour guide is a female, she sometimes faces these kinds of problems. Tourists give her the phone number, and she calls them for arranging the time and expenses “She tries to keep the tour happy and energetic, so everybody enjoys it. When the girl performs such activities in the tour, usually Iranian boys or men jump into the wrong conclusion. They think that this lady is trying to attract their attention. When the tour finishes, they keep sending messages to her. I have seen this a thousand times.” (resp. 8, male)

“A man who had gone on a Brazilian tour was complaining why his tour-leader in Brazil was a woman. He did not like to deal with a female tour guide. He said ‘In a city like Rio, men are more reliable’ Maybe he was worried about his security in Brazil. They think a lady tour leader can’t protect them.” (resp. 2, female)

Some Iranian female tourists don't believe the female guide is doing her job properly. They think she is enjoying the recreation: “They say, 'If I were your husband I would divorce you because you have been with the others for 20 days. You are traveling and enjoying yourself while your husband is alone’. A few ladies say, ‘Let me give you a friendly piece of advice. Put your job aside’.” (resp. 12, female)

Some Iranian male tourists admire her, but those admiring men don't like their own wives to follow this occupation. “If their wives say "I want to work in this field too," the man suddenly changes his mind and says "Oh no! That is not a good job for a woman. That is not a feminine job. I will never let you! Never ever!".” (resp. 9, female)

Some tourist guides defame their reputation. They don't know how to satisfy the tourists. “The general view of tourists about tourist guides is a clown or dancer, or an optional-seller who gets money for every extra option in the tour” (resp. 5, female)
Managers of Tourism Agency’s Opinions

Managers of agencies are the primary stakeholders in the tourism industry. Their perceptions directly influence the empowering process of female tour guides. Maybe in certain locations such as desert and hard climate, they prefer to hire men. In normal conditions, there is a positive discrimination in favor of women. The main reasons that managers of agencies state mostly for their preference to hire women are:

Being More Attractive: "This makes our market more attractive. We believe women are more influential on our travelers than men". (resp. 4, female)

Being More Passionate: “That is firstly because this improves their tour traffic. Secondly, because women are more passionate toward the travelers. Girls take more tours than boys in the agencies I have worked. I have noticed no negative discrimination” (resp. 8, male)

Although some agencies underestimate the capabilities of female tour guides, “when talking about salaries, they don't consider my hardships... The agencies prefer to work with women, but they try to pay less to female guides. It is easier for them to ignore women's rights than men's.” (resp. 11, female)

Gender discrimination decrease If the agency manager is a woman, “according to my experience, she lets us grow faster. If the manager is a man, he tends to employ more men in higher positions.” (resp. 12, female)

Sometimes, the agencies prefer not to use female staff for pioneering projects: “when they hold a tour to Australia for the first time, they prefer to send a male leader, although passengers are usually more satisfied with women. Pioneer women have been even more successful than men, but the agencies have the presumption that men are more successful.” (resp. 12, female)

Managers think married female tour guides will become pregnant soon and they will quit the field of business. They put females aside gradually. “As soon as I decide to get married, they will change my job without prior consent. Maybe I want to continue my job like before, but they decide to change my duties by default. They don't count on you as a long-term capital.” (resp. 12, female)

Even if men marry and they bring children, they still continue their jobs. While no matter how much agencies pay her, the woman will not come to work anymore if she becomes pregnant. “I can't invest only on women. If she becomes pregnant, I will lose my staff for 4 years..... Men don't have such problems usually... I have a male tour leader who does not get any leave permission all over the 365 days. He asked for leave permission only once, when his child was being born. Men are better from such an aspect.” (resp. 13)

This inequality is shaped by several barriers; sexual attitude towards women is one of them. Appearance is significant in tour guiding; this is right about flight attendants as well in the tourism industry. Companies consider beauty and attraction. “In our field of activity, we
have to influence our audience spiritually. Our appearance is important. Companies pay attention to this. They prefer to hire the most beautiful staff with elegant body fitness. Good-looking applicants are employed more easily” (resp. 3). But in a conservative society like Iran, women in public spaces should think about body representation and they should care about “others’ gaze.” Their movement is not free, and they face many visible and invisible obstacles. Tour guides are very active, and movement is a part of this career. They should struggle to get free of marginal positions. This condition is really complicated when a female tour guide works in the neighboring country, Turkey. There is no compulsory Hijab/veiling there, so some of the tourists behaved like this: “They pay a lot of attention to my appearance. They wonder when they see an Iranian lady is free of veil, and clothes freely. They are surprised with this. I have to take the utmost care of my behavior, so they won’t jump to a wrong conclusion.” (resp. 1, female)

**Male Colleagues’ Opinion**

Competition in an unequal society is not fair. Female tour guides are fighting against beliefs and stereotypes about women’s work. The gender isolation of society has become weaker in the tourist guides’ community. A male guide generally has a positive attitude towards his female colleagues. They indicated some of them in the interviews.

Patient Personality: “When a traveler becomes angry, someone ought to cool them down. Men might become even more upset than the client, and make the case even harder to handle. Women are usually patient. They pacify the audience.” (resp. 4, female)

Social Relationships: “Our colleagues believe that female tour guides behave friendly with men. They know those women don’t try to isolate themselves from their male colleagues.” (resp. 5, female)

Male coworkers think females are weak in eco-tourism, but they are professional cultural guides: “They perform even better than men, because they have more free time. They read more. Their minds are not too busy. Women concentrate very well on the matter. But for eco-tourists who go to nature, male guides are preferred. There are dangers in nature. For instance, if someone breaks their ankle or comes across a danger, men can handle the case more easily. Women are afraid of cockroaches, mice, and cats.”(resp. 7, male)

A male participant describes the weak points of female tour guides; he justifies the norms and values of patriarchal society: “Once I took a tour to sleep 3 nights among nomads. We could not go to the bathroom at all. We warmed the water and poured on ourselves behind a few rocks. This was how we bathed. What lady can do this? I don't say they are weaker than men. This is the norm in our society.” (resp. 7, male)

A male colleague has a different idea about women’s occupation: “Nobody expects a lady in Iran to earn money. Even if they earn a small amount, they have done a favor to their families. It is not been their duty. The story is different about men. I have to earn my living, but if my wife earns a bit, she has done a favor to the family.” (resp. 8, male)
Considerable Language Skills: “They have taken more time for learning foreign languages. They are sometimes stronger than men in the field of language. Additionally, foreign tourists are attracted to their feminine kindness. They behave better than boys.” (resp. 8, male)

Open-mindedness: “Most of the girls in our work area do not conform to the Iranian norms. All of them are open-minded indeed. The female tour leaders in Iran are very similar to the European girls. Since they know foreign languages, they learn more about the foreign cultures and countries. Most of them have the experience of going abroad.” (resp. 8, male)

Easy-going Manners: “They don't care if their scarves fall down, or they dance in front of men. 80 to 90 percent of the girls I know in this field are out of Iranian norms. They are even far from the norms of Iranian big cities.” (resp. 8, male)

Break the norms: “If she wants to follow the Iranian stands, she can never enter this business. She sometimes has to travel with many men in a male tour. She has to spend 15 days with them. A traditional Iranian girl cannot work in these conditions.” (resp. 8, male)

Work-life Balance: “Male colleagues highly respect a lady who can manage both family and occupational affairs at a time.” (resp. 9, female)

Too Young and Weak: the dialogs between two male and female colleagues are interesting. It shows generation gap of society. “My first experience was collecting a few tourists in Imam Khomeini Airport. You know that all European flights arrive after midnight. I went there alone with a taxi driver. I was waiting for my group. A male colleague at the age of 40 or 35 asked me with surprise, ‘Are you their tour leader?’ ‘Yes, I am,’ I answered. ‘Oh, poor little baby! You are too young for such a responsibility. Why did they send you?’, he asked. ‘Who knows? Maybe I am more learned than you yourself. It's not a matter of body weight. It's a matter of mentality’, I replied. ‘Oh dear me! I wonder why small girls come into such business. I never allow my own daughter to become a tour leader. She has to keep traveling. This is not suitable for a girl.’” (resp. 2, female)
Concluding Discussion

It is obvious that women’s agency are in the middle of social barriers and limitations. The number of women interested in tour guiding job opportunity is now increasing due to the fact that the development of tourism industry has been taken into consideration in Iran these days. Women are trying to occupy a job situation different from the roles that they played in tourism job market in the past, but this is contrary to popular opinion. Of course, these “public opinions” has improved in the course of time. Tour guides with 10-15 years of experiences have been observing changes in the domestic tours. It shows that the speed of transformations is relatively high. May be “generations gap” is not a proper concept for description of the shifts’ pace. For organizing the answers of research questions about the perceptions I draw five tables and summarize the main points of the interviews.

A large majority of the content of interviews consists of narrations of tour guides’ abilities, skills, and capacities that this job supplies them with. Most of these positive perceptions are categorized into social and psychological aspects of life. Economic empowerment of this job is unstable and uncertain. Vulnerabilities of tourism industry in the world generally and the conditions of tourism in Iran specifically explain why this occupation cannot empower them as same as psychological or social features. Living wage income for all year round is the first expectation of all participants that it is still missing.

1: Female Tour Guides’ Perceptions of Their Role and Workplace

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive perceptions</th>
<th>Negative perceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>Cosmopolitan, studious</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Addicted to job, hard-working</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tolerant attitude</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Communicative and convincing skills, group manager, fluent foreign speaker, crisis manager, great narrator, patient, kind person, trustworthy guide</td>
<td>Talkative person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Entrepreneur, independent of family</td>
<td>Unstable salary/income</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Women in Iran’s society like other countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) challenge these typically acceptable roles. Father, brothers, husband, and male colleagues are the men who put and define permissions and limitations.

The more important tendency of traditional and conservative men is to be dominant at home. Fathers and husbands like to have command on their daughters or wives, but the new generation does not follow this unfair system. Most of husbands support their wives
to participate in this job. It seems that “economic pressures” influence this decision. The role of father in the initial step for working in this occupation is fundamental because most of the tour guides start this job when they are too young so the father’s permission for a single girl in a patriarchal society is essential. Young tour guides must fight the stereotypes about “traditional roles of women” such as “women should only work as a teacher”.

2: Families’ Perceptions of Female Tour Guides’ Empowerment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive perceptions</th>
<th>Negative perceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>psychological</td>
<td>She can be active in the society</td>
<td>It is a dangerous work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>She can be active in the society</td>
<td>Do not have a work-life balance, Woman should only work as a teacher; It is not suitable for only daughter/single daughter, Not behaved well in this field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>It is a well-paid job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Foreign tourists’ expectations and imaginations about Iranian women are full of media stereotypes. When they visit Iran, they find out that they were wrong. It is far from what they thought. They say: "Iranians are more similar to Europeans than Arabs and the Pakistanis.” (resp. 8, male)

Before coming to Iran, foreigners believe that they will see a society like Saudi Arabia or Afghanistan. Women wearing “burqa” and thick veils are staying home and housewife is their only role in the society. While in a sharp contrast to their views, not only female tour guides do not follow the “traditional domestic role”, but they also act as a “buffer” and make the tourists experiences an enjoyable tour. “Hijab” cannot control empowerment of the tour guides. It is not as strict as other Middle East countries.
3: Foreign Tourists’ Perceptions of Female Tour Guides’ Empowerment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive perceptions</th>
<th>Negative perceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>Open-minded</td>
<td>Unable to solve our problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Able to drive, able to wear jeans, Not wearing burqa or thick veils</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Able to work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In most observed cases, Iranian tourist men’s perceptions have more positive views than women about female guides. A man complains about female guide in a very new destination (Brazil). Maybe he thought females are not capable in adventure or unusual trips. In domestic tours, men and women have the same idea. In other words, outgoing tours happen in different cultures and countries. Indeed, it is a “cultural shock”, especially to Iranian women. They wonder how a lady lives alone in a foreign country. They are surprised why she leads the tour alone. Their initial opinion is not positive enough about such a woman. They can't believe such level of liberty for a girl. A few passengers look her down, but the other ones admire it. The negative approach about married guides is prevalent, because women tourists think it can be difficult to get the right work-life balance.

4: Iranian Tourists’ Perceptions of Female Tour Guides’ Empowerment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive perceptions</th>
<th>Negative perceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>admired, fruitful and capable</td>
<td>unable to solve our problems, unable to protect us, It is not a feminine job, enjoying themselves for working in the job without husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Do not have a work-life balance, try to attract tourists attractions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Women are equal to men in guiding tours” is the common judgment about female colleagues. Male tour guides have very positive views about their colleagues. These opinions have been influential in their personality. From a men’s standpoint, patient personality, high
social relationship, and considerable language skills are common features in female guides. Work-life balance is one of the main advantages of female guides that male colleagues stated. I think it is difficult for men to reach this quality. As negative perceptions, one of the participant (resp. 7, male) claims that in eco-tourism conditions, women might perform weaker than men. He emphasizes some stereotypes about his workmate’s abilities: afraid of animals and Insects and being unable to work in rough situations while they mention several times their capacity in the management of crises during the tours. Destructive perceptions of managers of agencies about married female guides cause economic troubles and reduce their income. They believe married women cannot handle long-term tours or heavy workload. This marginalization of married women within this job starts with this stereotype. Economic empowerment of them is affected by male manager’s perception.

### 5: Male Tour Guides’ Perceptions of Their Female Colleagues’ Empowerment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive perceptions</th>
<th>Negative perceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>break the norms, studious, open-minded, tolerant attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>afraid of animals and insects (not suitable for eco-tourism ), unable to work in bad situation, too young and weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>patient, easy-going manner, communicative skills, fluent foreign language speaker, work-life balance, more attractive, passionate people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lack of crisis management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>equal salary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>married female tour guide will become pregnant (Managers), pregnant tour guide will quite the job (Managers)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Scheyvens’ empowerment framework (1999), this study shows psychological empowerment of these women in highest level. “Buffer” position of tour guides change and make their personality stronger than normal women in the society. They are expected to solve all the problems. They have done so well beyond all expectations. In a patriarchal society, “MEN” can do these masculine tasks, but young female tour guides normally can not. Social-cultural positive perceptions of female tour guides among themselves, male colleagues, tourists, and the family are obvious; although they are in the front line of fighting in legitimized rules and values of the conservative society. Economic aspects are the weakest part of this occupation. Indeed, they are “semi-empowered”. It seems that the structural factors of tourism industry are stronger than the agency of female tour guides.
Appendix A

Interview Guide

Background (Age, Sex, Education, Marital State, and Work Experiences)
1. Thank you for giving up your time, firstly, please introduce yourself by mentioning your educational degree, age, and other personal details.
2. How many years or how long you have been in this field?

Job Satisfaction
3. Are you satisfied with this job?
4. Would you elaborate why? How was the first year you started? How is your condition after these years? What changes have made you satisfied/dissatisfied?

Social Relationships (Colleagues, Family, Friends, and Relatives)
5. Who encouraged or suggested you to start this occupation?
6. Apart from family, your friends, or relatives, who ever encouraged you to enter this field of activity?
7. Apart from your occupation, who is your role model in life, in general? Why do you think they set an example for you?
8. (For Married Participants) Did this marriage influence your business? Does your husband disagree with this activity?
9. Do you think you will continue the job if you bring a child?

Others’ Opinions (Tourists, Colleagues, Managers, and Family)
10. Now tell me about the opinions of tourists, both men and women, about your occupation. How do they behave towards you? What is their spontaneous reaction when they see you as a female tour guide?

Job qualifications and problems
11. Would you explain one of critical cases? How did you manage the crisis?
12. What is the influence of this occupation on your own character?
13. (For Single Participants) if you marry one day, will you continue this business?
14. Does this job meet your living costs?

15. What problems and obstacles have you had over the course of your work?

16. Is there any difference between the income of your male and female colleagues? For example, do the agencies pay men more than women?

17. Don't you have pension and retirement insurance?

18. Did your syndicate association solve your insurance problem? Do you pay the insurance fee yourselves or via the agencies?

19. Do agencies give different salaries to experienced guides in comparison with the starters?
References


Marianna, M. (2011). What are the major ethical issues in conducting research? Is there a conflict between the research ethics and the nature of nursing?. *Health Science Journal.*


of Iranian Modernity.


Salehi Esfahani H. & P. Shajari (2010) “Gender, education, family and the allocation of labour in Iran”. University of Illinois, Urbana . USA


