

## CHALLENGES OF TOUR GUIDING IN SRI LANKAN TOURISM INDUSTRY

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**Abstract.** Tourism industry, as the most economically viable industry in contemporary Sri Lankan economy, has been recognized as the key drive for the country's economic development. Every professional in tourism field has a significant contribution in quality of the service and the satisfaction of the guests. Tour guides as the ambassadors of the Sri Lankan culture are playing an important role in tourism industry of the country. While serving the tourism industry, it is recognized that the tour guides face numerous difficulties while performing their job role. This study attempted to analyze the key challenges faced by tour guides in Sri Lanka and recommend strategic actions to overcome the challenges. This qualitative research used both primary and secondary data. Further, convenient sampling method which is a non-probable sampling technique was utilized to gather primary data. There are 39 tour guides selected as the sample. An unstructured interview was carried out as the primary data collection method followed by a critical onsite observation. Among the findings; low welfare and facilities, economic instability, lack of job security, knowledge gap and lack of social recognition were highlighted. The recommendations are made based on key challenges identified by the study. Welfare facility development as a collaborative attempt, improve financial literacy among the tour guide community, utilization of available vocational training institutes as knowledge hubs for tour guides by introducing short courses for needed knowledge areas, strategic approach in developing professionalism and social recognition for tour guiding as a profession are the main areas which the recommendations are made.

**Keywords:** Tour Guides, Sri Lanka Tourism, Challenges