



A short-form measure for assessment of emotional intelligence for tour guides: Development and evaluation

Jennifer C.H. Min*

Department of International Business, Ming Chuan University, No. 250, Sec. 5, Zhongshan N. Rd., Taipei 11103, Taiwan, ROC

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence (EI) is being recognized as a correlate of success in various domains of personal and professional life. The aim of this study is to generate and evaluate a shortened Chinese version of the Emotional Skills Assessment Process-Condensed Version (ESAP-CV) instrument for tour guides. Two stages with a total sample of 660 tour guides were conducted. The first sample ($N = 260$) was to develop the brief version through various deletion criteria, and the second sample ($N = 400$) was to examine factor structure, reliability, and validity of the short form through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The results indicate that the reliable and valid 35-item version (ESAP-CV-35), reduced from 104 items, captures the multidimensional nature of EI in six subscales. It offers tourism researchers a promising tool for conducting further EI-related research in a timely, effective and easily-administered manner.

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1. Introduction

Ever since the term “emotional intelligence” (EI) was first introduced by Peter Salovey and John Mayer in 1990, it has been developed, adapted, modified, and embraced by both practitioners and scholars. Shortly thereafter, EI was the cover topic of an issue of *Time* magazine (Gibbs, 1995), where it was claimed that “Emotional Intelligence may be the best predictor of success in life, redefining what it means to be smart.” The publication of Goleman’s influential books, *Emotional Intelligence* (1995) and *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (1998), has extended the EI concept to the business world and made it widely popular. This popularity has led researchers to examine its applicability to various aspects of human functioning, particularly in the fields of psychology, education, sociology, and management. Numerous studies have identified emotional abilities as being strongly associated with success in academic achievement, general life experiences, and a wide range of factors related to people’s jobs. These factors include physical and mental health (Dulewicz, Higgs, & Slaski, 2003; Tsaousis & Nikolaou, 2005), work attitude (Carmeli, 2003), resistance to stress (Bar-On, Brown, Kirkcaldy, & Thorne, 2000; Cha, Cichy, & Kim, 2009; Ciarrochi, Deane, & Anderson, 2002; Mikolajczak, Luminet, & Menil, 2006; Salovey, Stroud, Woolery, & Epel, 2002), interpersonal relations (Schutte et al., 2001), employees’ creativity (Zhou & George, 2003),

leadership (Gardner & Stough, 2002; Kerr, Garvin, Heaton, & Boyle, 2006; Scott-Halsell, Shumate, & Blum, 2008; Wolff, Pescosolido, & Druskat, 2002; Wong & Law, 2002), team effectiveness (Jordan, Ashkanasy, Hartel, & Hooper, 2002; Jordan & Troth, 2002; Koman & Wolff, 2008; Turner & Lloyd-Walker, 2008), job satisfaction and performance (Kafetsios & Zampetakis, 2008; Law, Wong, Huang, & Li, 2008; Prati, Douglas, Ferris, Ammeter, & Buckley, 2003; Sy, Tram, & O’Hara, 2006), and career achievements (Dulewicz & Higgs, 1999; Weisinger, 1998). EI is an active and essential ingredient of organizational success and provides for a more well-balanced work life (Fernandez, 2007; O’Connor & Little, 2003).

What is EI? Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined it as “the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (p. 189). The concept of EI emerged to describe people’s ability to deal with emotion-related issues such as problem solving (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999). Individuals who are emotionally intelligent may be more aware of their own feelings as well as the feelings of others, and such people are more capable of identifying and communicating them than less emotionally intelligent individuals (Mayer & Salovey, 1993). EI can be considered as a predictor of success because it reflects how individuals apply knowledge to immediate situations. In a way, to measure EI is to measure one’s ability to get along in the world (Bar-On, 1997).

Despite proven hypotheses confirming the importance of EI in the work environment, there is not, as yet, enough interest in the topic of EI among tourism scholars (Carvelzani, Lee, Locatelli,

* Tel.: +886 2 28824564x2830.

E-mail address: jmin@mail.mcu.edu.tw.

Monti, & Villamira, 2003; Langhorn, 2004). Because the tourism industry is characterized by high-contact encounters and considerable interaction with customers, it is especially crucial for professionals in this industry to have the ability to manage, regulate, and control their emotions in order to interact with others constructively and effectively (Carvelzani et al., 2003). Goleman (1998) argues that customer service providers with good EI skills are more capable of getting positive responses from the people with whom they interact. Understanding individuals' current EI levels is a significant first step for EI-related studies, because it provides a greater awareness of how individuals think, feel, and behave (Nelson & Low, 2003).

Tour guides act as intermediaries between tourists and an unfamiliar environment, thus playing an important role in the success or failure of a tour experience and influencing tourists' perceptions of the host destination (Hughes, 1991; Jiang & Tribe, 2009; Leclerc & Martin, 2004; Zhang & Chow, 2004). Because tour guides have such responsibility, special attention should be given to the EI levels of tour guides. In practice, tour guides can use EI skills to both manage their own performance and also to regulate tourists' moods in order to most appropriately and effectively interact with them.

1.1. Problem statement and purpose of the study

While considerable evidence of the importance of EI has been acknowledged, research efforts on the EI studies of tour guides are lacking in the tourism literature. Two of the reasons for this gap may be the relative newness of this construct and the lack of an appropriate EI measurement for tour guides. Hence, it is the aim of this paper to close this gap by developing EI assessment for measuring tour guides' emotional competencies based on the Emotional Skills Assessment Process-Condensed Version (ESAP-CV) instrument developed by Nelson and Low. The ESAP scale was conceptualized as a measurement of the EI skills that are needed for integrating cognitive and emotional processes, and this is a psychologically sound yet practical measure. Nelson and Low (2003) believed that EI consists of specific skills and attitudes that can be trained and developed in transformative learning strategies. The ESAP was designed as a starting point to respect the internal reference of the person and to start dialogues about the skills and attitudes they see reflected in current behavior. The initial ESAP instrument included 13 emotional skills and up to 213 items, but was subsequently revised to include 6 variables and 104 items (known as the ESAP-CV). Both reliability and validity were further provided on the Chinese version (see Min, Tang, & Yin, 2009; Min, 2010).

Although the ESAP-CV shows considerable value as a research instrument, several questions remain. First, the factor structure of the 104-item version has not been verified. Since the ESAP-CV is designed to yield 6 subscale scores representing 6 different dimensions of EI, its factor structure is a critical part of its EI profile. Second, the utility of the current version is diminished somewhat by its length, because the questionnaire usually takes 30–40 min to complete. It can be cumbersome to administer and time-consuming to score, resulting in limited research application. According to Hinkin (1995), scales that are shorter in length reduce the likelihood of bias caused by respondent fatigue and carelessness. Moreover, scales with fewer items provide respondents with easier access to answers to previous scales, which leads to increased consistency of responses (Harrison, McLaughlin, & Coalter, 1996; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Min (2010), investigating tour guides' EI in relation to demographic characteristics using the Chinese ESAP-CV, suggests that future researchers modify it into a shorter version because it is lengthy to administer. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to develop

an alternative, shortened Chinese version of this EI instrument for tour guides and to investigate the factor structure of the modified ESAP-CV. More precisely, the techniques are used for short-form development and factor structure examination building upon the broad, generic guidelines proposed by Gorsuch (1997) and Smith, McCarthy, and Anderson (2000). An abbreviated version of the ESAP-CV enables it to reveal assessments in a simple, timely, and effective way for EI-related research, and this should facilitate more widespread use of the instrument.

2. Current practices of tour guides in Taiwan

Traditionally, Taiwan's tourism industry has been regarded as an industry of secondary importance, while the government has primarily targeted development of the island's electronics industry, providing it with various incentives along the way. The significance of improvement in inbound tourism was not fully recognized until 2002, when the government issued the policy entitled "Doubling Tourists Arrival Plan 2008" to promote the island's tourism industry. The results have been successful. Of the total number of visitors in 2007, 44.3% came for purposes of tourism; this was the highest ratio over the past 10 years, and it represented a growth of 89.3% of those who came for tourism prior to the implementation of the plan (Tourism Bureau, 2008). These numbers are not easy to achieve, particularly in the intensely competitive Southeast Asia tourism market which includes such competitors as Hong Kong, Thailand, and Malaysia. In view of this trend, the government made many efforts to develop different package tour routes, and improvement work was carried out in the 13 national scenic areas to attract more inbound tourists. In order to resolve the shortage of guide personnel in Taiwan, the examination of tour guides was held annually by the *Ministry of Examination*, and the requirements were extended to graduates of high schools and vocational schools in 2004. Those who passed the tests were required to undergo pre-employment training from the Tourism Bureau and obtain a certificate of course completion before applying for professional certification.

According to the Annual Statistical Report (Tourism Bureau, 2009), there are 12,204 licensed tour guides working in Taiwan, 66% in Chinese and 34% in foreign languages. Among tour guides using foreign languages, the majority give tours in Japanese, accounting for 52%. The high level of Japanese used for tours is because the two countries have many common cultural and historical characteristics; Japan has been Taiwan's largest tourist generating country for many years. Tour guides using English followed with 42%, and Korean is third, accounting for 3%. In Taiwan, a tour guide can work full-time or on a freelance basis, which account for 20% and 80% of the total, respectively. Full-time tour guides usually have a basic monthly salary and guiding allowances for each assignment, while freelance tour guides usually work on a tour-by-tour basis by earning tips from tourists and commissions on shopping and other optional activities.

In order to upgrade the quality of tourism personnel, subsidies were given to the Tourist Guide Association to arrange advanced on-the-job training to make the guides more familiar with tour itineraries and improve their guiding skills. The courses include instruction and training in interpretative skills, Taiwanese specialties, demonstration of city tours/attractions, international etiquette, indigenous culture, tour coordination, emergency handling, arrival/departure formalities, hygiene and sanitation, and service attitude. The annual membership fee is approximately US\$60, and after joining, the tour guide can freely take any training courses the association provides (Tourists Guide Association, 2010).

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