

# TOURIST GUIDE - AN INTERFACE TO DISCOVER THE TOURIST DESTINATIONS

Lecturer Ph.D. Alina SUSLENCO

”Alec Russo” State University of Bălți, Republic of Moldova  
E-mail: alina.suslenco@mail.ru

***Abstract:** The conceptual aspects were analysed in the present paper, as well as the methodological aspects of the role and importance of the tourist guide in the discovery of the tourist destinations. In this context, we have to mention that representative aspects that outline the role of the tourist guide, as well as the evolution of tourist guides in the Republic of Moldova, were investigated in the work. For these reasons, there have been reviewed issues related to the evolution of tourist guides in Moldova, the legislation regulating the work of tourist guides in Moldova, as well as the importance of qualified guides for the development of the tourism sector. The methodology used in this paper focused on the following methods: analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction, comparative analysis. In conclusion, we must mention that tourist guides are the vectors of tourism development within tourist regions, in discovering the beauties of tourist destinations.*

***Keywords:** tourist guide, tourist destinations, tourism, tourist routes, the importance of tour guides.*

***JEL Classification:** L83, Z32, Z31.*

## 1. Introduction

Today’s tourism has become an activity that acquires new values and shapes its position and occupies a special place in the countries of the world. Tourism becomes the pillar of the visibility of a country, the bearer and the magnet of the attractiveness, investors, and tourists of the country. For these reasons, tourism, in the era of globalization, of the internationalization of market relations has become a country-level interface. That is why many countries pay particular attention to boosting tourism development as a branch of national economies. From this perspective, we have to mention that tourism is becoming more attractive because people want to travel, visit the world, visit different tourist destinations.

## 2. Content

A special place in increasing the attractiveness of tourism and the country as a tourist destination belongs to actors such as tourist guides that help people in organizing tourist routes in visiting various tourist destinations. Therefore, in order to facilitate the development of tourism, the necessity to have tourist guides has risen. The tourist guides facilitate the communication with the tourists who visit certain interesting places and to support the tourist’s knowledge of the tourist destinations, certain historical data, curiosities about the tourist attractions within the tourist trails. For these reasons, there has been a need to investigate the location, role and importance of tourism guides.

If we are to analyze the tour guides then we have to say that according to the legislation of the Republic of Moldova in the tourism sector, especially the Tourism Law no. 352 of 24.11.2006 the tourist guide is “a physical person who accompanies a visitor or a tourist group and grants them, within the limits of the tourist services contract, qualified assistance, providing information about the country (locality) of arrival, its natural and anthropic heritage” (Official Monitor, 2007).

From the analysis of this definition we observe that the tourist guide is the person who makes the connection, informs tourists about the tourist objectives, explains them and tells them about the places visited, their curiosities. From here, we can notice that the tourist guide is the tourist destination interface because if the tourist guide does not know the tourist destination well, the tourist will also not be able to know the interesting elements about this destination. Therefore, we can conclude that the travel guide represents

the destination itself, explains it and reports the most interesting facts about it. In this sense, the tourist guides must be present on both national and international tourist routes, organized by travel agencies. With the help of their work, destinations, tourist attractions and many interesting things can be discovered.

If we are to analyze the legislation in Romania, then we must mention that according to the Romanian Tourism Act, the tourist guide “is a natural person authorized to coordinate and ensure the development of tourist programs, based on the certificate issued by the authority of the central public administration responsible for tourism” (Official Monitor, 1998).

The analysis of this definition shows that the tourist guide is an authorized person, who has passed testing and has a document that attests and gives him/her the opportunity to act as a tourist guide. This definition highlights the fact that travel guides are responsible for the organization of tourist programs, that is, they are the persons who, depending on the needs, requirements, wishes and expectations of the tourist or tourists from a tourism program, will organize and run this program. It is noticeable that the tourist guide is a creative person who assumes the obligation to know the tourist destination to make a tourist program and to offer the tourist the opportunity to be served qualitatively.

If we are to analyze the definition of tourism guides by the World Federation of Travel Guides Associations, the concept of travel guide sounds like this: „*Tourist Guide is a person who guides visitors in the language of their choice and interprets the cultural and natural heritage of an area which person normally possesses an area-specific qualification usually issued and/or recognized by the appropriate authority*” (Ghid Local, 2017).

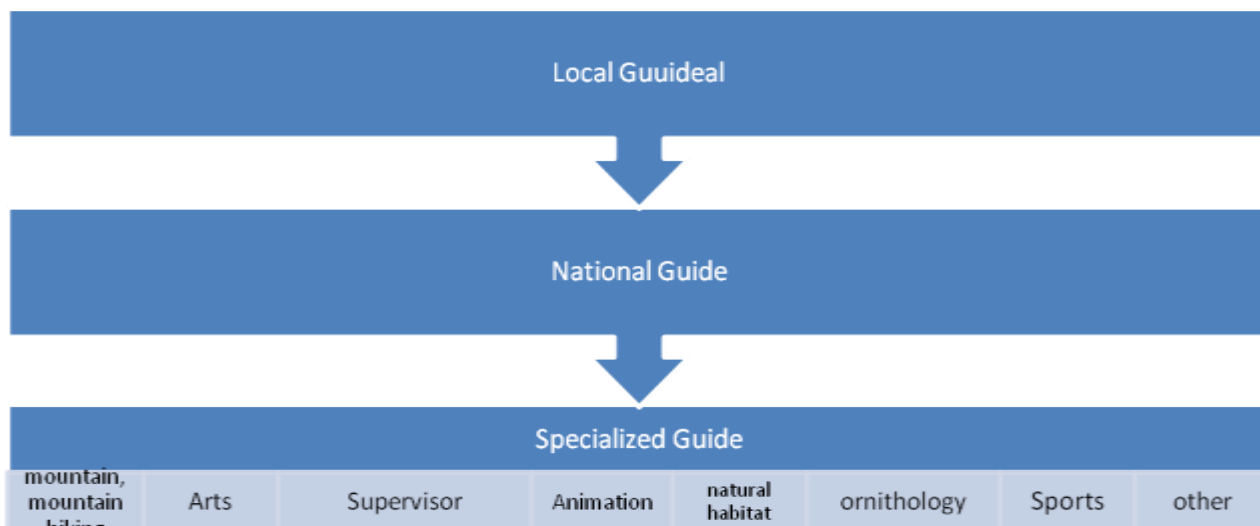
From the analysis of this definition we observe that the tourist guide is a person who guides the tourist in knowing a destination. This is a competent person who knows the language of the tourist and can serve it qualitatively by helping him to discover that destination. Besides, this definition puts emphasis on the need to qualify this tourist guide, i.e. to have a document that would attest this qualification. It should be noted that as tourist guides there must serve those persons who are competent, who have certain capacities and who have been certified by the competent persons.

If we are to analyze the method of attesting the tourist guides, then we need to review the existing rules of attestation and use of the tourist guides in Romania. According to these norms in Romania there are the following categories of tourist guides, shown schematically in Figure 1. From the analysis of the Figure 1. it can be noticed that according to these norms there are 3 categories of tourist guides: local, national and specialized guides (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2003).

*The local guide* - is concerned with serving tourists, managing, informing, advising them on a given territory - there is an issue regarding this item as it is not known the territories belonging to these categories, i.e. it is not known whether a guide from the Northern Zone of Moldova will be able to provide the tourist services on the touristic route which also includes some tourist destinations in other areas.

*The national guide* - is the person who helps to conceptualize, inform, advise tourists in a particular country, that is, knows all the destinations, the touristic objectives, the tourist routes in that country.

*The specialized guide* - is the person who advises, helps the tourist in knowing some specific tourist objectives, such as: mountain, art, animation, natural habitat, sports, others. The knowledge that this category of guides possess, strictly corresponds to this category of classification to which he/she belongs (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2003).



**Figure 1. Classification of tourist guides**

Source: developed by the author on the basis of the Norms regarding the conditions and criteria for the selection, training, certification and use of tourist guides in Romania

From the analysis of the given norms, we can mention that as a guide can activate any individual who holds a certificate of tourism.

Tourist guides' professional training can take place in:

- higher education institutions;
- within the grownup vocational training system (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2003).

Consequently, we can observe that tourist guides can be trained either in Romanian higher education institutions or in some existing training systems of tourist guides.

According to the conforming methodological norms, the attestation of the tourist guide is the document issued by the Ministry of Transport, Construction and Tourism, which confirms the professional capacity of the qualified individuals in the tourist guide profession to work in one of the categories of tourist guides, defined in the present methodological norms" (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2003).

According to these methodological norms, we observe that the tourist guide activity can only be done and performed if the individual holds this attestation confirming his/her skills and training for one of the guides listed above.

Tourist guides can be employed within the travel agencies that organize different touristic tours, national or international touristic programs and are hired as travel guides.

The person in possession of the tourist guide attestation can work on his/her own without being employed by a travel agent.

According to the methodological norms "the travel guide badge is issued by the Ministry of Transport, Construction and Tourism through the National Authority for Tourism" (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2003).

According to the norms given in some cases the travel guide attestation can be withdrawn.

Therefore, if it is found that more than 5 complaints have been registered which, as a result of verification by the control officers of the Ministry of Transport, Constructions and Tourism are found to be well grounded, the measures of withdrawal of the tourist guide attestation can be undertaken (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2003).

In order to select suitable persons for professional qualification courses for the profession of a *local tourist guide*, the applicant must meet the following requirements, shown schematically in Table 1.

**Table 1. Mandatory requirements to be certified as a travel guide in Romania**

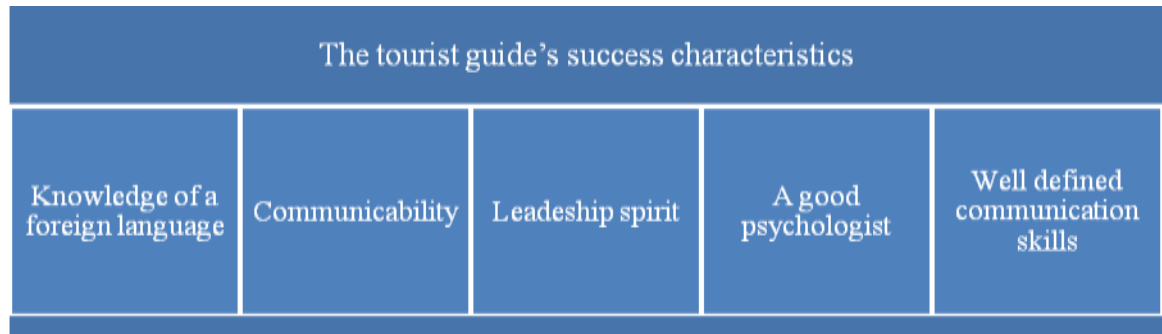
Requirements for local tourist guides	Requirements for national and specialized tourist guides
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. to have the minimum age of 18 years old and the maximum age of 65 years old;</li> <li>2. to have at least Bacalaureate high school education;</li> <li>3. have not been convicted (fact proved by the criminal record certificate);</li> <li>4. to be medically fit for the tourist guide profession (clinically and mentally healthy, without physical impairments, speech or hearing impairment);</li> <li>5. to have reasonable knowledge of at least one foreign language of international circulation, proven by a certificate of knowledge of a foreign language, for Romanian individuals and a certificate of knowledge of the Romanian language, for foreign natural persons;</li> <li>6. to have knowledge of general culture/ awareness proven by a verification test.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. to have the professional qualification for the tourist guide profession;</li> <li>2. to have at least Bacalaureate high school education;</li> <li>3. to have the minimum age of 18 years old and the maximum age of 62 years old for the specialized tourist guide and 65 years old for the national tourist guide;</li> <li>4. have not been convicted (fact proved by the criminal record certificate);</li> <li>5. to be medically fit for the tourist guide profession (clinically and mentally healthy, without physical impairments, speech or hearing impairment);</li> <li>6. for the category of specialized tourist guide they must possess thorough theoretical and practical knowledge specific to the category of specialized chosen tourist guide position;</li> <li>7. to have reasonable knowledge of at least one foreign language of international circulation, proven by a certificate of knowledge of a foreign language;</li> <li>8. to have knowledge of general culture/ awareness proven by a verification test..</li> </ol>

*Source:* developed by the author on the basis of the Norms regarding the conditions and criteria for the selection, training, certification and use of tourist guides in Romania

According to the statistical data from Romania, there are 3790 certified tourist guides, which have passed all certifications and have been certified as tourist guides and bear tourist badges (TravelBlog, 2018). Only 10% of them practice this profession. Most of them have a work experience of no more than half a year (TravelBlog, 2018).

In the opinion of several guides working in this field, the tourist guide must have several qualities that ensure his/her success in this profession, such as: communicability, punctuality, knowledge and skills in the field of leadership (Acasa.Ro, 2018). In addition to these qualities, a good tourist guide must also be a good psychologist, that is to have the opportunity to intrude the tourist's expectations, to convince him/her, wherever the need arises (Ghid Local, 2017).

The tourist guide's success characteristics are schematically shown in the Figure 2.



**Figure 2. The tourist guide's success characteristics**

Source: adapted by the author based on several tourist guides' opinions

According to the latest statistical data published in Romania there are 10 associations of guides that offer new information, among which we highlight:

- National Association of Guides in Romania;
- „Banat-Crișana” Association of Guides;
- Association of professional guides from the Danube Delta (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2018).

Thanks to these associations, guides meet, discuss, make decisions on issues that arise during their activity.

In Moldova, there are about 40 tourist guides, who know the routes to the national tourist attractions and are employed by tour operators and travel agencies of the country (Nedelea, A., 2003).

Besides these, there are some 324 local guides who are employed by 108 museums and practice, on request, extra-museum excursions to some attractions specific to the tourist area. Thus, within 30 km from any tourist destination in Moldova, a local guide can be employed (Nedelea, A., 2003).

The guides work on the basis of individualized tourist routes, where 200 objectives are to be visited in Chisinau and in the republic. The topics of the trails are, as a rule, knowledge of the native land or biographies of some personalities. Some landmarks with tourist potential (wineries, monasteries, scientific reservations) have local guides hired to inform visitors, who are trained and attend special courses or are self-taught. They are only available for excursions concerning their own attractions and can be hired by any group of visitors, following a pre-coordinated request (Ghid Local, 2017).

In order to identify the success components, the role and importance of tourist guides in the dynamism of tourist flows, we decided that it would be useful to carry out a research that will help us to see how optimal and timely are the services provided by the tour guides.

The *aim of the research* is to identify the success characteristics, the role, the importance of tourist guides in the development of tourism.

The *specific objectives of the research*, which will help to achieve the general goal of the research are:

- identifying the main features that characterize a professional tourist guide;
- analysis of respondents' opinion on the importance of tourist guides in providing tourists support;
- analysis of the role of tourist guides in the intensification of tourist flows;
- identifying suggestions for Moldovan tourist guides.

*The Research Tool*

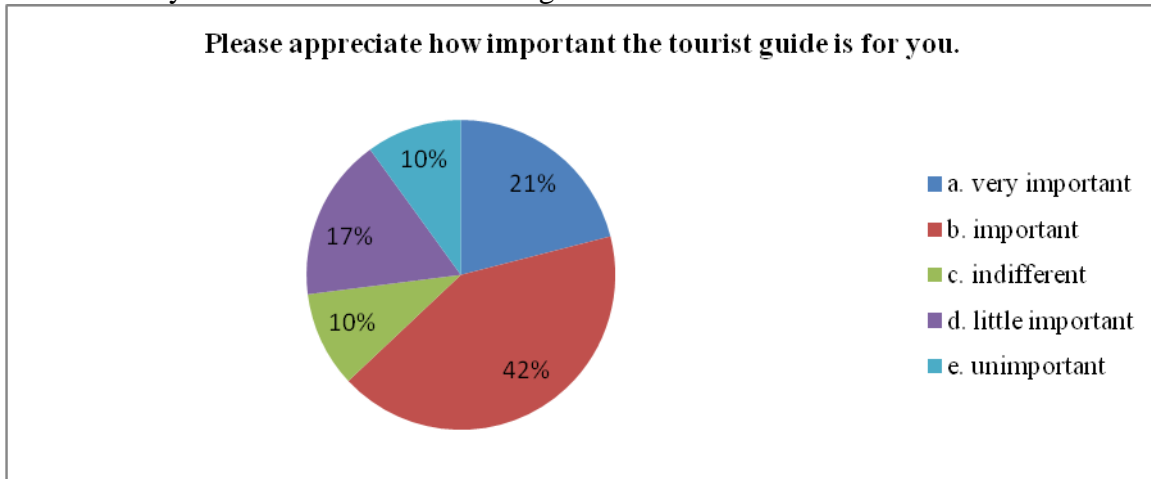
The questionnaire is the research tool used in this investigation.

*The Population and the sample*

The subjects of the research are the tourists who return from the holidays from Bulgaria with the buses of transport companies. These subjects were selected to be able to find out their views on the work of the tourist guide from the bus and his/her relevance, the help that was provided by the tourist guide for travellers.

*Presentation of the results*

In this context, by analysing the first question of the questionnaire, we must point out that the synthetic data are shown in Figure 3.

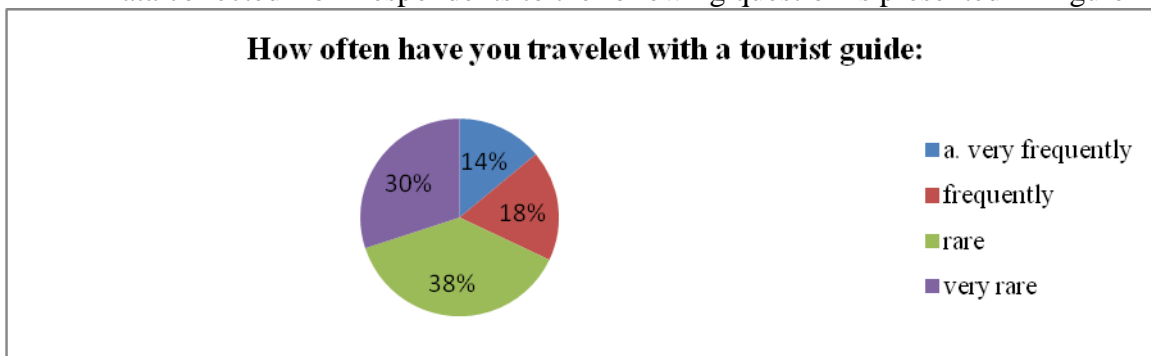


**Figure 3. Analysis of respondents' answers**

Source: Elaborated based on analysis of survey data

From the data presented in Figure 3, it is observed that most of the survey respondents 42% believe that the tourist guide is important for their life, and 21% noted that the guide is very important, for 17% the tourist guide is a little important, and 10% of the interviewed tourists are indifferent or the tourist guide is not important for their lives. From the analysis of the data obtained for this question, we can see that most of them have a positive attitude and are aware of a positive influence of tourism on their life.

Data collected from respondents to the following question is presented in Figure 4.



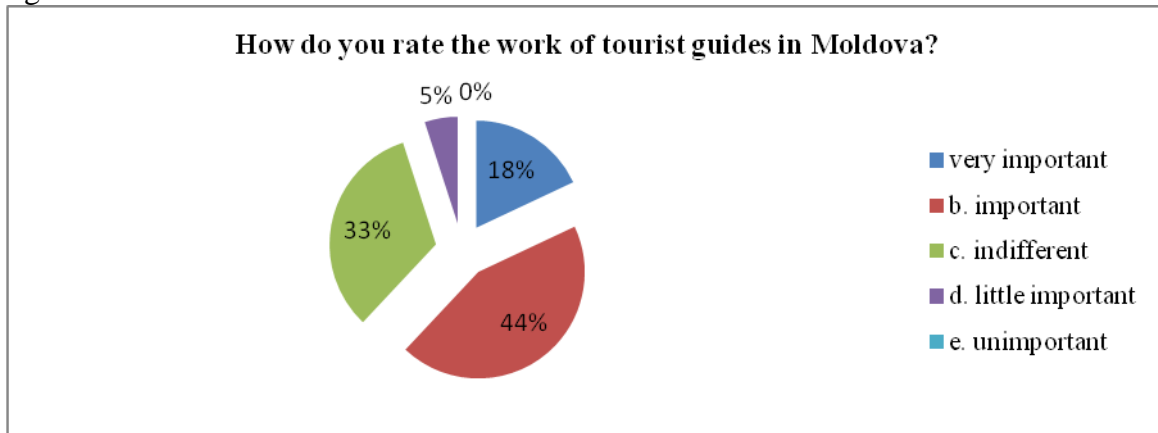
**Figure 4. Analysis of respondents' answers**

Source: Elaborated based on analysis of survey data

From the data presented in Figure 4. it can be noticed that the tourists participating in the study resort to the services of a different tourist guide, 38% of the respondents noted that they rarely travelled with a tourist guide, 30% noted that they rarely travelled with a tourist guide, 18% noted that they often travel with a tourist guide and only 14% of the survey respondents noted that they often travelled with a tourist guide. This shows that the Moldovan population is not ready to use the travel guides services because, besides a

supplementary budget, the tourist guide also requires free time, availability and motivation, which not all the tourists have.

The data collected from the respondents to the survey next question are presented in Figure 5.

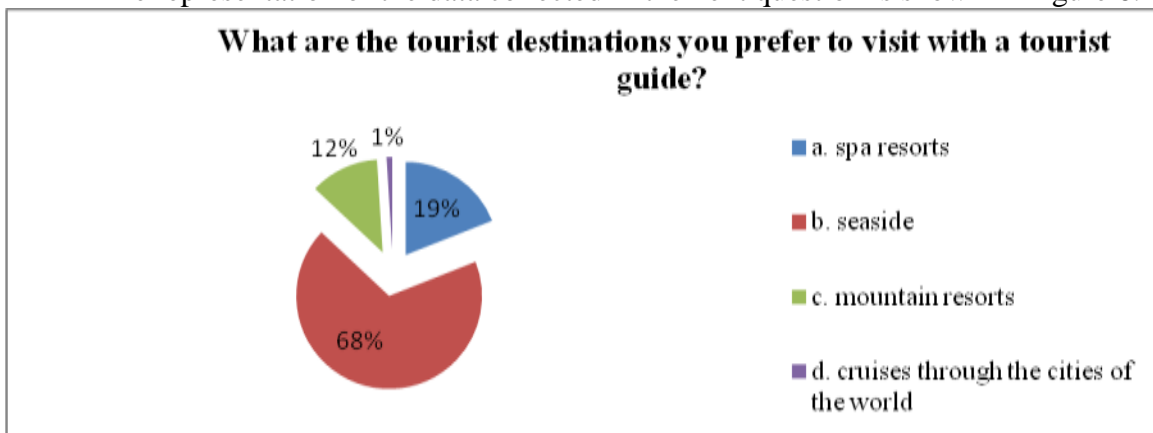


**Figure 5. Analysis of respondents' answers**

Source: Elaborated based on analysis of survey data

The analysis of the data collected to this question we can observe that the majority of the survey respondents 44% think that Moldovan tourist guides are important, while 33% of respondents are indifferent to the work of the tourist guides in Moldova and 18% of respondents have noted the fact that the work of tourist guides in Moldova is very important and 5% of respondents consider the work of tour guides of little importance.

The representation of the data collected in the next question is shown in Figure 6.

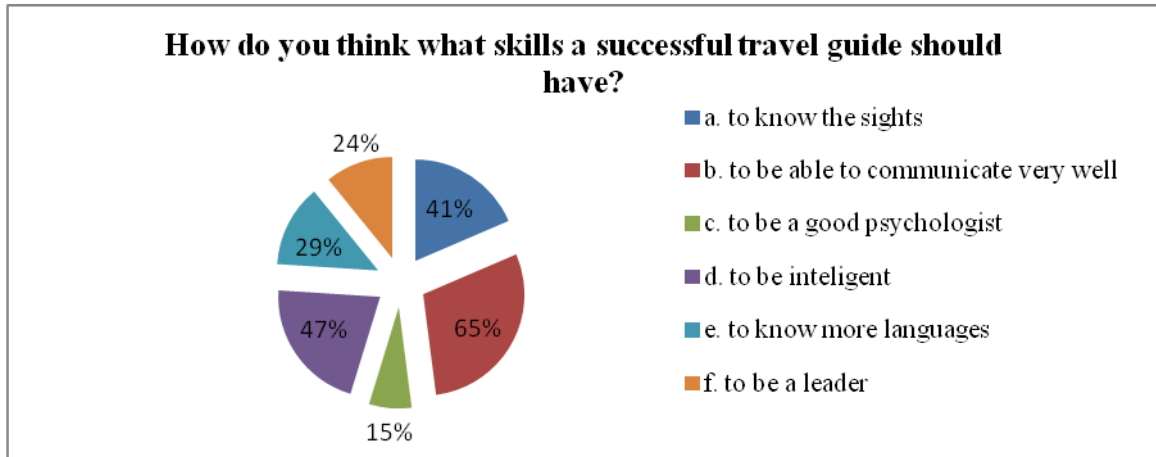


**Figure 6. Analysis of respondents' answers**

Source: Elaborated based on analysis of survey data

From the analysis of the data presented in Figure 6 it can be noticed that the tourists who have been surveyed prefer to go to rest with a tourist guide in such destinations as the seashore, which is noted by 68% of the respondents, the spa resorts that scored 19% of the respondents, and 12 % noted that they prefer mountain resorts, while only 1% said they preferred cruises through the cities of the world. This indicates that Moldovan tourists prefer the sea as a way of rest and relaxation along with a tourist guide.

The analysis and presentation of the results collected in the next question are shown in the figure 7.

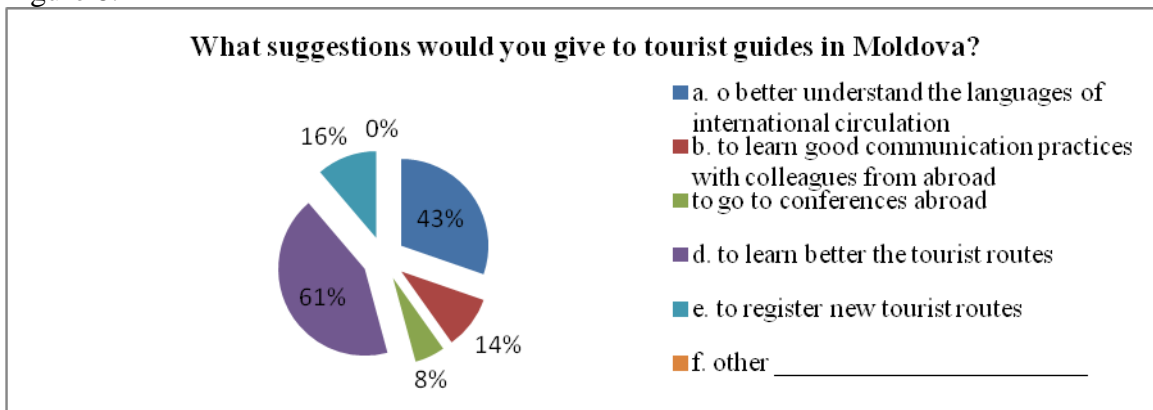


**Figure 7. Analysis of respondents' answers**

Source: Developed by the author based on data processing

From the analysis of Figure 7, it can be seen that the majority of the respondents 65% think that a main success characteristic of a good tourist guide is to be able to communicate very well, 47% of the respondents noted that a good guide should be intelligent, and 41% of the respondents noted that a good guide must know well the tourist objectives/ destinations, and 29% of all survey respondents think that the tourist guides need to know more languages. Moreover, only 15% of the respondents think that a good tourist guide must be a good psychologist.

A summary of the data collected to the next question of the survey is presented in Figure 8.



**Figure 8. Analysis of respondents' answers**

Source: Elaborated based on analysis of survey data

From the analysis of the centralized data to the thirteenth question of the questionnaire it is observed that 61% of the survey respondents believe that Moldovan tourist guides need to learn better Moldovan tourist routes, and 43% said that it would be good that Moldovan tourist guides better understand the languages of international circulation. In addition to these suggestions, there were other proposals from respondents of the survey, as 16% of respondents noted that the tourist guides must record the tourist routes, and 14% noted that it would be good if Moldovan tourist guides learn from good practices from other foreign colleagues. In addition to this, a suggestion was made to go to conferences abroad.



### 3. Conclusions

After presenting the results of the research carried out, it can be noticed that the tourist guides play an important role in the tourists' life. In addition to this, the present research has made it possible the identification and analysis of the characteristics that define a successful tourist guide. Thus, it has to be mentioned that this research was useful for reaching the goal of the research and the objectives assumed. If we go back to the research goal of "identifying the successful features, the role of tourist guides in the development of tourism", then we have to mention that it was achieved because the given research revealed the features, the role and the importance of the tourist guides.

If we are to analyse the first objective of the research "identifying the main features that characterize a professional tourist guide" then it should be noted that this objective was achieved because the questions that were included in the questionnaire and addressed to the respondents highlighted the most important features of tourist guides that ensure their success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

If we go back to the second objective of the research, "the analysis of the respondents' opinion regarding the importance of tourist guides in providing tourist support", this objective was reached because the respondents' answers to the questions of the survey revealed the role of the tourist guide and his/her importance for tourists.

Analysing the third objective of the research "analysis of the role of tourist guides in the intensification of tourist flows", we can mention that this objective was achieved because of the questions that were included in the questionnaire and the answers received from the surveyed respondents.

Returning to the fourth objective of the research "identifying the suggestions for Moldovan tourist guides", this objective was achieved because after conducting this research, some suggestions for Moldovan tourist guides were identified and highlighted in order to improve and develop their work.

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