

# **The Influence of Guide Training on Ecotour Guides & their Environmentally responsible Practices & Transformational Leadership Abilities: A Qualitative and Quantitative Case Study**

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# Presentation Outline

- Background & Introduction
- Research Questions
- Methods & Participants
- Results
- Next Steps

# Introduction & Background

- The NE Ecotourism Industry:
  - Small, in its infancy
  - Great potential
  - Ranch tours, camping, river tours, birdwatching
- Needs:
  - Opportunities for guide training programs/resources



# Introduction & Background

- Ecotourism Guide Training Literature:
  - The importance of guides & training
  - Professional development organizations
  - Australia, Central America, Europe
- Needs:
  - More evaluations & descriptions of existing programs
  - Qualitative research on training impacts
  - Leadership studies

# Research Questions

- A qualitative study to explore:
  - The ***characteristics*** of training programs
  - The ***training techniques*** used by trainers
  - The ***influence*** of training on student guides
- A quantitative study to measure the relationship between:
  - Training & ***environmentally responsible behaviors (ERBs)***
  - Training & ***transformational leadership (TL)***

# Participants



- South African model was chosen:
  - Ecotourism is an important & well-developed industry
  - National nature guide certification (Field Guides Association of Southern Africa – FGASA)
- EcoTraining was selected as the case:
  - Oldest training provider in Southern Africa (existed before FGASA)
  - Exceptional domestic & international reputation
  - Many programs (5 days to 1 year) (focused on level 1 courses)

# Methods

- Qualitative:
  - Participant Observation
    - Safari Guide Course – Non-accredited, 4 week course
    - Same instructors, camps, materials, & activities as accredited courses
  - Semi-formal interviews with trainers, current, & former students
- Quantitative:
  - 54 item survey to measure Transformational Leadership (TL), Guiding competency, & Environmentally Responsible Behaviors (ERBs)
  - 45 Likert style, 5 open ended, 4 multiple choice
  - Based on the Multifactorial Leadership Questionnaire, FGASA syllabus, & relevant literature
  - Distributed online through Qualtrics & in person



# Results

- 20 Interviews completed
  - 9 themes in 4 categories
- 168 surveys distributed
  - 25 returned (18 complete)





# Results

- Training Philosophy:
  - Good training is the same as good guiding
  - Guiding is more than facts & charismatic megafauna

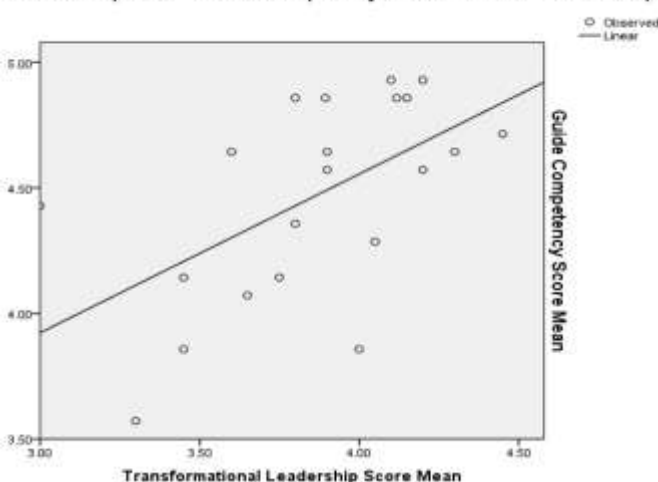


# Results

- Training Methods
  - Align with educational practices & interpretive principles
    - Multisensory learning
    - Experiential learning
    - Tailored to students needs & interests
  - Diverse exposure
    - Up to 13 different instructors
    - Trained at 4 camps in 2 countries
    - Multicultural & multinational peer groups
  - Feedback loops
    - Between instructors & FGASA
    - Between instructors & students
  - Transformational leadership
    - Instructors exhibit TL characteristics & abilities
    - $r(19) = .568, p = .007$



Relationship between Guide Competency & Transformational Leadership

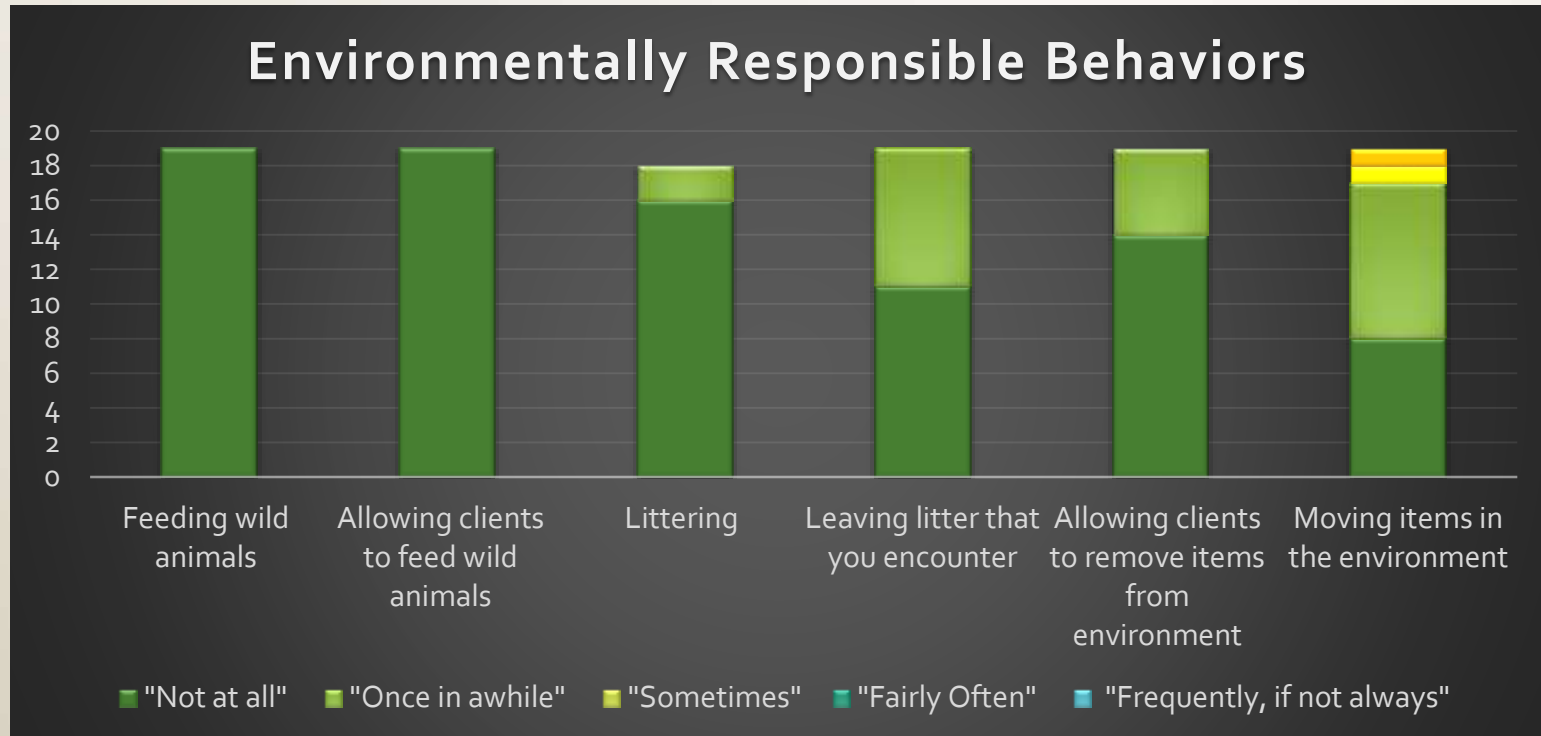


# Results



- Training Outcomes:
  - Rapid student development
    - Driven by methods & environment
  - Increased passion for & connection to nature
    - All students had a prior interest in nature, but nearly all reported increases in awareness, awe, & appreciation

# Results



- No significant relationship was found between training & ERBs
- Most likely due to measurement error
  - Differences between the literature & the program
  - Ceiling Effect
- Data frequency suggests ERBs are adopted post-training



# Results

- Limitations of the Training System
  - Does not guarantee high quality guiding
    - Provides the **basic foundation & skills**
    - Underprepared, but have the **tools & confidence** to succeed.
    - Personal choice to guide like they were trained - Influenced by norms & occupational pressures

# Conclusion

- **9 themes** were discovered regarding key characteristics & outcomes of a reputable guide training program
- There is a **significant positive relationship** between **training & TL**
- Students frequently **practice ERBs post training**
- Remaining Questions:
  - How can we better explore the relationship between training & ERBs?
  - How can researchers better connect with guides?
  - How can this be applied to other regions like Nebraska?