



Enhancing Tour Guiding Competencies through Simulation-Based Learning in Vocational Tourism Education

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ABSTRACT

The simulation-based learning method is one way to train students to become skilled and professional tour guides in the future. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effectiveness of simulation-based learning in enhancing students' tour-guiding competencies in the Tourism Destination study program at the State Polytechnic of Jember. This study employs a qualitative approach by collecting data through observation, in-depth interviews, and a literature review. The participants were 71 students enrolled in the course, from whom 10 were purposively selected as key informants based on their direct participation in simulation-based learning activities and their ability to provide rich, relevant information about their learning experiences. Data were analyzed using the Colaizzi technique, focusing on how students interpret their experiences during the simulation. The results reveal that simulation-based learning effectively enhances students' tour-guiding competencies by strengthening their communication, leadership, time management, and problem-solving skills while increasing self-confidence and emotional resilience. The learning experience also improves students' readiness to handle real-world professional situations by fostering teamwork, stress management, and workplace adaptability. Overall, the findings confirm that simulation-based learning, as a form of experiential learning, effectively develops cognitive, affective, and psychomotor competencies required of professional tour guides. Therefore, this approach should be integrated into the tourism curriculum to enhance students' work readiness and support practice-oriented learning.

Keywords: *experiential learning, simulation-based learning, tour-guiding competencies*

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INTRODUCTION

Tour guides play a strategic role in the tourism industry, serving as liaisons between destinations, tourists, and the socio-cultural values of both. During a trip, tour guides play a crucial role and are fully responsible for all information about the destination from start to finish (Rahmawati & Meisyanti, 2023). The quality of tour guiding directly impacts tourist satisfaction, the destination's image, and the sustainability of tourism (Trivenna & Eviana, 2024). Therefore, improving tour guide competency is a crucial aspect of developing professional, competitive human resources in tourism (Sengoz et al., 2025).

Tour guiding competency is not only about mastery of interpretive materials but also encompasses communication skills, group management, persuasive information delivery, and the ability to adapt to various field situations. However, the tour guiding learning process in tourism education and training institutions still tends to be oriented towards theoretical approaches and passive learning (Sengoz et al., 2025). This situation has the potential to create a gap between the competencies acquired during the course and the demands of guiding practice in the field (Sun et al., 2025).

Education is one of the keys to success in building a more advanced nation (Darsiyana et al., 2022). State Polytechnic of Jember, as a vocational education institution under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, plays a role in improving the quality of competency-based education (Kamiliyah NH & Miqawati, 2023). State Polytechnic of Jember is fully committed to providing vocational education with a learning proportion of 60% practical and 40% theoretical. This curriculum approach is intentionally designed to ensure that students develop the knowledge, practical skills,

and professional competencies required by the tourism industry and other stakeholders (Subijanto et al., 2020). To achieve these outcomes and strengthen collaboration with industry, vocational education institutions need to continuously demonstrate the quality and relevance of their graduates (Berybe et al., 2023). Therefore, learning approaches that closely reflect workplace conditions are essential to preparing students for professional careers and increasing industry confidence in vocational education (Wulandari et al., 2026).

Learning methods play a crucial role in student learning (Ernani, 2017). Lecturers should use learning methods that increase students' interest in participating actively according to their abilities (Noerdjanah & Sugiono, 2024). One method relevant to the characteristics of vocational education at the State Polytechnic of Jember, particularly in the Tourism Destination study program, is simulation-based learning. The simulation method is a method that can be applied to students to do something, and students can learn how to face a real situation (Pitaloka & Saputri, 2020). This learning strategy places students in simulated scenarios that mirror real-world work conditions, allowing them to practice skills directly without exposure to potentially risky real-life situations. The use of these learning methods makes students imaginative, broad-minded, independent thinkers, curious, full of energy, and self-confident, and able to improve their cooperation (Nurani, 2020).

In the context of the tour guiding course, simulation allows students to assume various roles, such as tour guides and tourists, and to practice the entire tourism service process. Simulation methods are seen as a relevant learning approach to address this challenge (Martins et al., 2025). Simulation is a method of presenting learning experiences through simulated situations to understand specific concepts, principles, or skills (Ndasi et al., 2023). This method allows students to actively engage in learning experiences that mimic real-life tour-guiding situations, thereby encouraging the development of practical skills, increased self-confidence, and a contextual understanding of the role of a tour guide. Through simulation, students not only learn about tour guiding but also experience guiding itself. By using this learning method, it is hoped that students can try to explore relationships between humans by demonstrating them and discussing them, so that together, students can explore feelings, attitudes, values, and various problem-solving strategies in the field (Basri, 2017; Hutagalung et al., 2022).

Previous studies have discussed and examined simulation methods and tour guiding. Research by Kanoksilapatham & Suranakkharin (2019) indicates that simulation-based learning methods, such as role-play, tour-guide simulation, and virtual-guide simulation, significantly improve students' competency in the tourism sector, particularly in English-speaking skills and tour guiding. These methods have been proven to create a more contextual, interactive learning experience that approximates real-world situations in the tourism industry. Research by Rafiddin O'g'li (2026) suggests that technological developments such as virtual simulations further enhance learning effectiveness by providing immersive experiences, increasing learning engagement, and accelerating the mastery of professional competencies required in the tourism workplace. Furthermore, research by Rachman et al (2023) provides ample opportunities for students to practice directly (learning by doing), increase self-confidence, improve communication and public speaking skills, and deepen their understanding of the material. In tour guiding practice, simulations also encourage the internalization of language skills into students' mindsets and enhance professional readiness. Overall, the simulation-based learning method is an effective and relevant approach for tourism education, but it needs careful planning, increased student motivation, and technology integration to achieve optimal learning outcomes.

Even though these positive results are encouraging, there are still key areas that aren't well covered in the current research. Previous research on simulation-based learning has mostly focused on language abilities, communication skills, or the effectiveness of simulation technology. There hasn't been much focus on how simulations help develop the broader skills that professional tour guides need, such as communication, group management, decision-making, adaptability, and readiness for the work environment. There is minimal research on vocational tourism education, particularly in Indonesian higher education.

To address this gap, this study examines students' experiences of simulation-based learning through Colaizzi's phenomenological analysis. This research differs from earlier studies by providing a comprehensive perspective on how simulation-based learning helps students in the Tourism Destination study program at State

Polytechnic of Jambi develop the skills needed to become professional tour guides. Accordingly, this study aims to examine how simulation-based learning enhances students' tour guide competencies. The results are likely to add valuable information to studies on Experiential Learning and Simulation-Based Learning by providing empirical data from vocational tourism education. Practically, these results can help teachers create learning experiences that are realistic and practical, better preparing students for jobs in the tourism field.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Experiential Learning

The Experiential Learning Theory by David A. Kolb (1984) reveals that learning is a process in which knowledge is constructed through the transformation of experience. In addition, the student's own experience is the learning medium used (Alfian et al., 2023). This learning approach also facilitates students in improving their knowledge and skills in learning (Nurzafirah et al., 2023). Learning occurs not only through conceptual instruction but also through direct engagement, enabling learners to develop greater understanding, skills, and attitudes (Morris, 2018). The Experiential Learning theory outlines a four-stage cycle: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Bertoni & Bertoni, 2020). This cycle indicates that experience serves as the primary basis for establishing sustainable knowledge (Pamungkas et al., 2019).

Within vocational education, Experiential Learning theory is particularly pertinent because it emphasizes active student participation in activities that replicate real-world work environments (Shreeve, 2008). Learners must not only comprehend concepts cognitively but also apply them in practice to acquire authentic experience (Henríquez et al., 2025). After these experiences, students reflect on their successes and challenges and relate these understandings to conceptual knowledge to enhance their future performance in tour guiding. This approach fosters meaningful learning by helping students continuously develop their competencies through repeated cycles of experience.

Simulation-Based Learning (SBL)

Simulation-Based Learning is a learning method that focuses on simulations to create situations that resemble real-world conditions (Kasperski et al., 2025). This method enables students to practice their own knowledge, skills, and decision-making in a safe environment. In addition, this allows students to learn through experiences designed to prepare them for the real world of work without incurring actual risks. The Simulation-Based Learning process typically includes a briefing, simulation execution, and debriefing or reflection, which provides students with the opportunity to receive feedback, suggestions, and input, and to evaluate their performance (Kolbe et al., 2015). Therefore, this method is widely used in vocational education because it bridges the gap between classroom learning and workplace demands (Goueli & Firoozi, 2024).

Experiential Learning theory and Simulation-Based Learning are closely related. This is because Simulation-Based Learning is essentially a practical implementation of Experiential Learning. Simulations provide concrete, real-life experiences that serve as a starting point for the learning process, while debriefing sessions encourage students to reflect on their experiences (reflective observation). The results of these reflections are integrated with previously learned concepts or theories, which are subsequently reapplied in subsequent simulations or practices (active experimentation). Thus, the use of this simulation method can not only improve technical skills but also develop students' abilities, especially in communication, problem-solving, self-confidence, teamwork, and readiness to face the world of work (Anbari & Kerari, 2025). In research on simulation learning in this tour-guiding course, these two theories serve as a conceptual basis, explaining that learning experiences gained through simulations can improve student competencies more effectively than learning that focuses solely on delivering theory (Ross, 2021).

METHOD

The present study employs a qualitative research approach to explore students' experiences in simulation-based learning in the Tour Guide course. This method was chosen because the analyzed data describe the observed phenomena or factors (Kamiliyah NH & Miqawati, 2023). This research was conducted at the State Polytechnic of Jember, within the Tourism Destination study program, over a three-month period from December 2025 to February 2026. The informants were 10 students selected through purposive sampling, with the researcher establishing the criteria. The selected informants were students enrolled in the Tourism Destination study program who had completed the Tour Guide course and actively participated in the tour guide simulation. This informant selection strategy was used to ensure relevant and in-depth data collection (Lestari & Kamiliyah NH, 2025).

A total of 10 informants were interviewed, and data collection continued until saturation was achieved, as evidenced by the absence of new themes. Data collection methods included observation, semi-structured interviews, and literature review. Analysis was conducted using Colaizzi's phenomenological method, which entailed identifying significant statements, formulating meanings, grouping these into themes, and developing comprehensive descriptions of students' experiences. Data validity was ensured through triangulation, specifically by employing source triangulation to verify information across multiple sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on interviews with 10 students in the Tourism Destination study program and data analysis using the Colaizzi technique, the study found that the simulation-based learning method yielded four main themes: increased self-confidence, time and group management, nervousness and stress management, and workplace readiness. Table 1 summarizes each theme, its associated sub-themes, and a representative quotation; a brief narrative highlighting selected illustrative accounts follows.

Table 1. Main Themes of Simulation-based Learning

Themes	Sub-themes	Representative Statements
Increased Self-Confidence	Confidence in public speaking	<i>"At first, I felt really nervous when I had to speak in front of the class, but after several simulations, now I'm more confident explaining what I know." (Informant 1)</i>
	Confidence in handling audience questions	<i>"This simulation has gotten me used to dealing with people asking questions, so now I'm more confident when I have to deal with tourists later." (Informant 8)</i>
Time and Group Management	Scheduling and workload conflicts	<i>"Sometimes it's really hard to manage time, especially when the class schedule is busy. I also have to arrange time for group practice." (Informant 1)</i>
	Group cooperation and cohesion	<i>"Sometimes there are friends who don't want to cooperate, so it's difficult to practice together. In the end, the same people are always working on the same thing." (Informant 5)</i>
Nervousness and Stress Management	Performance anxiety	<i>"I was really nervous when I first performed. I was afraid of saying the wrong thing, especially when I had to answer questions from my friends." (Informant 1)</i>
	Coping strategies (breathing, peer support)	<i>"When I start to get nervous, I usually take a deep breath and try to focus on the material I've memorized." (Informant 5)</i>
Readiness for the Workplace	Understanding job roles and responsibilities	<i>"This simulation helps me understand what I'll face on the job, from how to talk to tourists to dealing with difficult questions." (Informant 1)</i>
	Interpersonal adaptability with clients	<i>"I'm more confident talking to different people because during the simulation I have to learn to deal with different types of people." (Informant 7)</i>

Source: Researcher's Data (2025)

Increased Self-Confidence

There are several reasons students may have speaking difficulties in public, but the most common is a lack of confidence (Sari et al., 2025). Increased self-confidence was one of the changes students experienced during the Tour Guide course simulation. Informants stated that the simulation activity transformed their initial nervousness into a more comfortable and enjoyable experience when speaking in public and answering questions from peers and lecturers. Furthermore, several informants mentioned that the simulation activity made them feel more confident during a question-and-answer session. This underscores that the confidence gained is not only related to the prepared presentation but also to interactive resilience in unplanned situations (Thannhauser et al., 2024). Informants reported that, through the simulation, students felt more confident conveying information, speaking in front of an audience, and facing challenging situations. This change was expressed by several informants. One informant states:

"At first, I felt really nervous when I had to speak in front of the class, but after several simulations, now I'm more confident explaining what I know." (Informant 1)

This aligns with research by Jallad (2025), which reveals that simulations can help students build self-confidence through practice in speaking and information delivery. A supportive environment and repeated simulations provide students with space to gradually improve their skills. Furthermore, another informant states:

"I used to be afraid of having to answer questions directly from lecturers or friends. But now, I'm calmer and more confident because I feel prepared thanks to this simulation method." (Informant 5)

This condition aligns with the theory advanced by Chernikova et al (2020), who explain that simulations are an effective way to train students to handle real-life situations. Simulations not only help students understand the material but also foster confidence in their individual abilities. Several informants also highlight increased self-confidence regarding audience interactions, as expressed by informant 8:

"This simulation has gotten me used to dealing with people asking questions, so now I'm more confident when I have to deal with tourists later." (Informant 8)

According to the informant, the increase in self-confidence they feel resulted from continuous simulation activities, which provide students with several opportunities to practice and learn from mistakes without serious consequences. This simulation method also helps students feel more confident about later starting to guide and engage tourists without fear of failure, thereby reducing anxiety and helping them anticipate the typical public-speaking experience (Yusmi et al., 2021). Furthermore, this simulation-based learning focused on how students engage in question-and-answer sessions on prepared material and build their self-confidence through two-way communication. Therefore, it is not only the opportunity for repetition that promotes self-confidence, but also the engagement with unpredictable, real-time interactions during the simulations that directly mirror the challenges students will face in actual tour-guiding contexts (Le et al., 2025). This indicates that both the structure of the simulations and the nature of their interactivity work in tandem to produce meaningful gains in student confidence (Yu et al., 2026).

This supports the findings of Jallad (2025), who found that simulations allow students to practice directly, thereby increasing their confidence in facing real-life situations. In addition, it is in line with Chernikova et al's (2020) study, which reported the use of simulations as rehearsal for real-world contingencies. This finding underscores that confidence gains are disaggregable into at least two mechanisms: rehearsal-based fluency and interactive resilience, a distinction that prior simulation-learning literature does not clearly draw. Simulation design in a tour guide course should deliberately include unscripted question-and-answer segments rather than relying solely on rehearsed presentations, since it is this interactive unpredictability that appears to translate most directly into workplace-ready confidence when facing real tourists (Le et al., 2025).

Thus, the simulation method serves as an effective tool for fostering student self-confidence, as demonstrated by both the informants' testimonies and the supporting literature. The integration of practice, structured procedures, and hands-on experiences enhances self-assurance and better prepares students for real-world professional demands (Zapko et al., 2018). These findings highlight the urgency of incorporating simulation-based activities into tour guide education, as they provide practical experience that directly supports students' transition to the workforce and their ability to handle unpredictable situations with greater confidence.

Understanding Time and Group Management

One of the challenges students face during simulation learning in the Tour Guide course is difficulty managing time and group work. Students must be able to balance their schedules between simulations and other lecture activities, and collaborate with group members with diverse personalities. According to Nurrahma et al (2023), the ability to manage time and collaborate in groups is an essential skill that needs to be developed for success in practice-based learning, such as simulations. Several students share their experiences in facing this challenge:

"Sometimes it's really hard to manage time, especially when the class schedule is busy. I also have to arrange time for group practice." (Informant 1)

Furthermore, another informant reveals that another challenge is group work:

"Sometimes there are friends who don't want to cooperate, so it's difficult to practice together. In the end, the same people are always working on the same thing." (Informant 5)

As explained in the interviews above, the challenge in the simulation is not only coordinating activities but also ensuring that all group members can fully participate. Students find it difficult to divide their time among other course assignments and feel that each individual in the group lacks responsibility, resulting in uneven task distribution for the simulation. This condition reflects the problem that not all group members have the same level of commitment or responsibility for completing the task. Another informant also highlights the importance of maintaining group cohesion in simulations:

"People have different personalities, so it's sometimes difficult to put ideas together. But over time, we learned to understand each other so the simulation could run smoothly." (Informant 4)

Interviews elucidate that students struggled not just with balancing their academic schedules but also with working together and ensuring everyone participated in the simulation activities. Since the simulation involves tasks that depend on one another, differences in commitment, work habits, and available time among group members become more apparent than in individual assignments. As a result, managing time and coordinating as a group was key to making the simulation work.

This opinion aligns with Khuzwayo (2018) theory that group work succeeds when communication is effective, and tasks are clearly divided. While a study by Khuzwayo (2018) focuses on these factors, it indicates that students' sense of fairness in how work is shared is also essential in simulation-based learning. This point is not often highlighted in earlier research, but it seems especially relevant in vocational settings where group performance matters more than individual results. It, furthermore, aligns with research by Graser (2026), which found that time management is a major challenge in simulation-based learning due to students' busy schedules. This finding is also consistent with Khuadthong et al (2025) research that found that group learning can be difficult due to personality differences and poor communication. Based on this research, simulations are meant to help students build interpersonal skills. In the tour guide course simulation, the challenges are designed to reflect real fieldwork. Tour guides need to work well with others, including drivers, tour leaders, local communities, industry partners, and tourists. Thus, being able to work in a team, coordinate,

and adapt to different situations is essential. By participating in simulations, students gain teamwork experience that prepares them for real jobs.

In summary, interviews demonstrate that, in addition to having trouble managing their time and working in groups, students also learned a lot from the simulation activities. These experiences helped student improve their time management, resolve conflicts, and build teamwork skills. This not only made them better managers but also taught them the importance of collaboration in achieving shared goals. These skills are vital in the tourism industry, where tour guides must work with a wide range of people while maintaining high-quality service. Simulation-based learning helps students do well in school and prepares them for their future careers (Xie, 2023). The challenges they face during simulations are valuable learning experiences that help them grow professionally.

Related to the research findings above, simulation-based learning should include clear role assignments, regular progress checks, and peer evaluations to ensure every student participates equally. Using these strategies can help build teamwork and conflict-resolution skills, while also making task distribution fairer during simulations (Chernikova et al., 2020). Students often struggle to manage their time and work in groups during simulations (Brown et al., 2020). Good time management is crucial so that everyone can fully participate in their tasks. Numerous students struggle to finish group assignments on time and ensure all the material is covered. Group work also presents challenges in coordinating and fairly sharing tasks. However, students who learn to manage their time and work well in groups can build better management skills, which are valuable in jobs that require teamwork (Koppenborg & Klingsieck, 2022).

Overcoming Nervousness and Practicing Stress Management

One of the challenges students regularly experience during simulation activities in Tour Guide courses is nervousness about performing in front of an audience. This nervousness comes from the pressure placed on students to perform well. This reaction is common among students with little public-speaking experience. According to Cavaleri et al (2023), simulations that mimic real-life situations can trigger nervousness in students, but also provide a means to gradually practice stress management. One informant describes her feelings during her first simulation:

"I was really nervous when I first performed. I was afraid of saying the wrong thing, especially when I had to answer questions from my friends." (Informant 1)

This aligns with Lintner & Belovecová (2024) research, which found that nervousness is a common reaction among students during their first simulation due to a lack of public-speaking experience. Another informant shared a similar experience, particularly when dealing with a critical audience:

"Sometimes I'm really nervous, especially if someone asks me something I don't know the answer to. I immediately feel panicked." (Informant 3)

The interview results exhibit that the anxiety stems from uncertainty about how to respond to unanticipated questions. While students begin to feel confident speaking in public, this anxiety resurfaces during a question-and-answer session, and they fear they won't be able to answer. Overall, these results indicate that students' nervousness stems from two interrelated sources: public speaking and the need to respond spontaneously to questions under pressure.

This result is consistent with Fu et al (2023) research, the panic students experience when facing an audience is part of the learning process to improve their critical thinking skills and spontaneity in real-life situations. Furthermore, several informants share strategies they use to manage stress:

"When I start to get nervous, I usually take a deep breath and try to focus on the material I've memorized." (Informant 5)

This strategy aligns with the breathing rate theory proposed by Migliaccio et al (2023), who emphasized that breathing exercises and focused attention can reduce stress during public performances. Another informant adds that support from group members is very helpful in reducing stress:

"When I'm nervous, my friends often encourage me and tell me everything will go smoothly. That makes me calmer." (Informant 7)

These interview results describe that students gradually come not only to recognize their nervousness but also to develop strategies for managing it throughout the simulation. Simulations place students in situations that simulate real-life work conditions, allowing them to experience both cognitive and emotional stress simultaneously (Abbott et al., 2021). As practice increases, students begin to build coping strategies that help them manage their anxiety and maintain their performance.

Pertaining to the interview results, students stated that support from friends can reduce nervousness. These results are consistent with research by McKimmie et al (2020), which found that group social support can help students overcome nervousness and increase their confidence during simulations. In tour guide simulation exercises, the ability to manage nervousness is fundamental because tour guides are expected to communicate confidently and answer tourists' questions in dynamic situations. Therefore, the emotional demands experienced during the simulation process are very similar to those faced by professional tour guides in the workplace. These results indicate that students' ability to manage anxiety develops not only through repeated practice but also through the interaction of self-regulation strategies, such as breathing techniques, and social support from peers. This underscores that emotion regulation in simulation-based learning is formed by both individual and collaborative processes (Huang et al., 2024).

The results furthermore support the Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984), which explains that learning occurs through the transformation of experience. The nervousness experienced during the initial simulation represents a concrete experience. Through reflection on the causes of their anxiety, students engaged in reflective observation while identifying coping strategies such as breathing techniques and peer support, which reflect abstract conceptualization. By applying these strategies in subsequent simulations, students engaged in active experimentation, gradually improving their performance and professional competencies. This demonstrates how Simulation-Based Learning provides a safe learning environment where students can repeatedly experience, reflect on, and refine their interpersonal and emotional competencies (Yun & Kang, 2024). As a result, the simulation not only improves students' tour guide competency but also strengthens their readiness to perform confidently in authentic professional situations.

Through this experiential process, students gradually developed the ability to regulate nervousness, think clearly under pressure, and communicate confidently (Le et al., 2025). These competencies represent essential employability skills for prospective tour guides, particularly in communication under pressure, emotional regulation, adaptability, and professional interaction with tourists. These findings underscore that simulation activities should incorporate gradual exposure to public speaking, structured debriefing sessions, stress management strategies, and peer feedback (Ko & Choi, 2020). Such an approach can strengthen students' emotional regulation, communication competence, and skills, as well as their readiness to work as real tour guides.

Preparedness for the World of Work

Simulation-based learning in the Tour Guide course not only trains students' technical skills but also prepares them to face workplace challenges. Simulations that mimic real-life situations allow students to directly understand the roles and responsibilities of a tour guide and develop competencies relevant to the tourism industry. One informant states that the simulation experience provides them a real-life glimpse into the world of work:

"This simulation helps me understand what I'll face on the job, from how to talk to tourists to dealing with difficult questions." (Informant 1)

These interview results align with Sellberg & Lindwall's (2026) research that found that simulation-based learning can help students identify professional challenges and improve their future job-readiness. Another informant also reports that simulations help hone communication skills, which are crucial for a tour guide:

"I've become more confident speaking in front of large groups, learning how to convey information so that people understand and are interested." (Informant 3)

This supports Priharjuna et al.'s (2025) research, which states that effective communication skills are one of the key competencies a professional tour guide must possess. Furthermore, one informant states that the simulation experience provided insight into the importance of time management and decision-making in urgent situations:

"Sometimes during the simulation, a problem suddenly arises, and we have to make a quick decision. That helps me learn to be more prepared for work." (Informant 5)

This aligns with May's et al (2024) research, which found that problem-solving simulations help students prepare for unexpected situations at work, making them better at responding and adapting. One informant also highlights how simulations build the confidence needed to interact with clients from diverse backgrounds:

"I'm more confident talking to different people because during the simulation I have to learn to deal with different types of people." (Informant 7)

This is supported by Khuadthong et al (2025), who stated that simulations improve students' interpersonal skills, especially in adapting to tourists' diverse characteristics. Overall, interview results indicate that the simulations play an essential role in preparing students for the world of work. Through exercises that mimic real-life situations, students not only develop technical skills but also build confidence, communication skills, and decision-making skills relevant to the needs of the tourism industry. These simulations provide a foundation for students to contribute as competent professionals ready to compete in the workforce.

These findings also support Experiential Learning Theory (Kolbe et al., 2015), which explains that learning is constructed through the transformation of experience. The simulation lets students experience real-life situations similar to those of a tour guide. They practice talking to tourists and coworkers, answering surprise questions, and making quick decisions when things get tough. Through these experiences, students can identify which abilities and skills they need to work on and apply them in future simulation activities, demonstrating reflective observation, abstract thinking, and active experimentation. This process reveals how students gradually build not just their technical abilities but also their skills in communicating, managing tasks, making decisions, adapting to changes, and feeling confident in their professional roles.

These results underscore how Simulation-Based Learning is a real way to put Experiential Learning into practice. By creating a safe and comfortable setting that mimics real work environments, simulations let students apply what they've learned in theory, receive feedback from classmates and teachers, and improve their skills through repeated practice (Madsgaard & Svellingen, 2025). This type of learning through simulations helps connect what students learn in class with the real-world skills they'll need when working as tour guides, making them better prepared for their future careers.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Simulation-based learning in the Tour Guide course of the Tourism Destination study program has been proven effective in improving student skills. Through this method, students can build and strengthen their self-confidence, improve their time management and group work, manage nervousness and stress, and prepare for the world of work later. Overall, simulation learning in the Tour Guide course provides students with invaluable opportunities to develop a range of skills relevant to the world of work and to prepare them to

become professional, competent tour guides in the tourism sector. This study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence for the practical application of experiential learning theory in tourism vocational education through simulation-based learning. The results indicate that repeated simulation experiences enable students to develop communication competencies and skills, emotional regulation, teamwork, decision-making, and job readiness. These findings provide insight into how simulation-based learning can support the development of students' professional competencies to become future tour guides.

From a practical perspective, these results underscore that vocational tourism schools should continue to use real-life simulation exercises, planned reflection time, and constructive feedback as part of training tour guides. These practices can help students become more skilled in their professional areas and better prepared for the workplace. This study includes only students enrolled in a specific program who are taking the Tour Guide course and uses data based on participants' shared experiences. As a result, the outcomes may not be applicable to other educational settings or tourism initiatives.

Future studies should examine how simulation-based learning compares with other teaching methods, such as role-play or project-based learning, to determine which is more effective at helping people develop the skills needed to be a tour guide. In the future, researchers might use a mix of research methods or study the same group over a long period to better understand how simulation-based learning affects students' skills and their ability to succeed in real-world work situations.

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