FACTORS AFFECTING AZERBAIJAN OUTBOUND TOURISTS TO CHOOSE GEORGIA AS TOURISM DESTINATION

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Abstract

One of the most popular typology of tourist motivation is the Crompton's (1979) push and pull model which emphasizes that tourist's choice of a travel destination is influenced by two forces. Push factors that push individuals from home, and pull factors that pull individuals toward a destination. From this point of view the aim of this research is "To research about factors affecting Azerbaijni to choose Georgia as a holiday destination" by analyzing tourist satisfaction with questionnaires and tourism agencies.

Introduction

One of the most popular typology of tourist motivation is the Crompton's (1979) push and pull model which emphasizes that tourist's choice of a travel destination is influenced by two forces. Push factors that push individuals from home, and pull factors that pull individuals toward a destination. In other words, people are travelling because they are pushed by their internal motives and pulled by external forces of a travel destination (Lam and Hsu, 2006). It has been stated that most push factors derive from individual's intangible or intrinsic desires, such as desire for escape, adventure seeking, dream fulfilment, novelty seeking, rest and relaxation, health and fitness, prestige, and socialization (Chon, 1989; Lam and Hsu, 2006; Uysal and Jurowski, 1993). The push motivations have been seen to be useful in explaining the desire for travel, as they are recognized as the starting point of understanding tourists' behavior (Crompton, 1979; Kim et al., 2008). Yoon and Uysal (2005) have found that push motivations such as excitement, relaxation, achievements, family time, escape, safety and curiosity have a direct positive effect on behavioral intentions.

Backman et al. (1995) highlighted that motivations are connected to individuals' basic needs for participating diverse activities, developing preferences, and expecting satisfaction. The motivations of wellbeing and wellness activities, purchasing wellbeing and wellness products and services or participating in wellbeing holiday are also connected to customers' needs and interests. Mak et al. (2009) found five motivation factors, friendship and kinship, health and beauty, self-reward and indulgence, relaxation and relief, and escape. They found out that relaxation and relief, escape, self-reward and indulgence, and health and beauty were important underlying motivations (mean over 3 on five-point Likert scale). Smith and Puczkó (2009, pp. 262-263) have listed reasons, why people are going to a holiday trip they emphasize that trends and reasons to participate wellbeing and wellness activities vary considerably, and the trends are based closely to leisure patterns.

Swan (1981) defines behavioral intention as an individual's anticipated or planned future behavior. Behavioral intention has been suggested to be a central factor which correlates strongly with observed behavior (Baloglu, 2000). Diverse models of consumer behavior are building upon the theory of reasoned action which emphasizes intention as an immediate antecedent to actual behavior. Alegre and Cladera (2009) have pointed out that several studies of consumer intentions, for instance, to make repeat purchases or visit a destination have focused on the factors that determine this intention. It has also been demonstrated that psychological variables such as socio-psychological motivations are determining behavioral and visitation intention (Baloglu, 2000). In addition, Uysal (2005) has highlighted the importance to study visitors' motivations before they visit actual attractions or destinations. Some of the studies have also shown no link between motivation and behavioral intention. In

these cases the problem have usually been that the measurement of motivation has been after completion of a visit, and then benefits gained can disrupt the original picture of motivation (Nowacki, 2009).

1.1 Push factors

The 'push' factors originate from Maslow's hierarchy of needs and have been described as motivational factors or needs that arise due to a state of disequilibrium or tension in the motivational system (Dann, 1977). For example, Gray (1970) in the very first classification of pleasure travellers, defined two varieties of tourists namely, the wanderlust (push) and sunlust (pull). The former emphasizes destination cultures, people and landscape while the latter prefers destination amenities. Dann (1977) suggests that motivational factors can be classified as 'anomie' and 'ego- enhancement'. Anomie refers to the desire to transcend the feeling of isolation inherent in everyday life and to simply 'get away from it all' while ego-enhancement derived from the need for recognition and is obtained through the status conferred by travel (Fodness, 1994). Crompton (1979) on the other hand, identified seven socio-psychological and two 'alternate cultural' motives guiding visitors' choice of a holiday destination and these were, escape from a perceived mundane environment, exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relationships, facilitation of social interaction, novelty, and education. Floyd & Gray (2004) confirmed that escape and seeking were two primary motives associated with pleasure travelers.

There are two main types of push and pull factors identified, which are personal and interpersonal. It's suggested that people are motivated to travel to leave behind the personal or interpersonal problems of their environment and to obtain compensating personal or interpersonal rewards. The personal rewards are mainly self-determination, sense of competence, challenge, learning, exploration, and relaxation. The interpersonal rewards arise from social interaction.

According to Dann, travel is motivated by "going away from" rather than "going toward" something, and travelers' motives and behavior are markedly self-oriented. An early paradigm for understanding tourist motivation is the push-pull model. This is based on the distinction between factors, which encourage individuals to move away from their home setting through tourism (push factors) and those attributes of a different place which attract or pull them towards it

1.2 Pull factors

Pull factors are external, situational or cognitive aspects to the tourist that compel the latter to travel to a destination (Yoon and Uysal, 2005). To be more explicit the tourist is attracted by the destination attributes effecting from publicity or promotion or any other means thus giving a perceived image of the particular destination. Indeed, it is evident that pull factors play an important role into shaping the tourist travel motivations. In fact this may boost up the needs of the individual to have an experience at the particular destination as indicated by Dann (1977) who argued that pull factors of the resort such as sunshine, relaxed tempo, and friendly natives both respond to and reinforce push factor motivation. Foodness (1994) confirmed that pull factors are those that are inspired by a destination's attractiveness such as beaches, recreation facilities, cultural attractions, entertainment, natural scenery, shopping and parks which may stimulate and reinforce inherent push motivations. Yuan and Mc Donald (1990) identified seven pull factors: budget, culture and history, ease of travel, wilderness, cosmopolitan environment, facilities and hunting. The findings indicated that individuals from each country might travel for the same reasons but reasons for choosing a particular destination and the level of importance attached to the factors might differ among the countries due to the varying nature of each destination.Furthermore the pull factors in the form of driving forces are described as positive ones which boost an individual to travel to specific destinations and negative ones such as fears and aversions which lead not to travel to certain destinations.

As such the perceived destination experience conceptualizes fully the pull factors which will affect the traveler. Pearce et al (1998) gave some insight on pull factors which may fulfill people's motives for travelling. Therefore, one single attribute or activity may represent a mix of motiveswhich serves as an attempt to satisfy the needs of the individual.

1.3 Tourism destination images and its pull factors

Destination images have long been recognized as influential "pull" factors in destination choice (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Ahmed (1996) argues that the "image of a destination and attitude of tourists towards that destination seem to be two of the most important factors in destination selection" (p. 44). Goodrich (1978) demonstrated that "the more favorable the perception towards destination, the greater the likelihood of choice from among similar alternatives". Woodside and Sherell (1977) demonstrated empirically a strong link between destinations most memorable (and accessible) in consumers' minds as places to visit and attitudes and intentions toward actually visiting these destinations. Hence, positive destination images are related to positive purchase decisions (Woodside &Lysonski, 1989), while negative images, even if they are unjustified, tend to deter potential visitors .This explains the proliferation of studies aimed at understanding the role and influence of destination image in the destination choice process

Images are generally accepted to be based on the knowledge of certain attributes (cognitive components), feelings towards these attributes (affective components), and the resulting intended behavior (con-active component). This process of choosing a destination based on its attributes has been termed as "discursive processing" (Ashworth& Goodall, 1990). As a result, most studies have measured the cognitive components of image (Echtner& Ritchie, 1991) while the affective component has received lesser academic interest (Baloglu&McCleary1999).

Multi attribute models still remain the favored measurement approach. This structured approach involves various common image attributes being specified and incorporated into a standardized instrument, usually set of semantic differential or Likert scales. However, increasingly mixed or qualitative methodologies are being used to understand the construct (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). An unstructured approach employs an alternate form of measurement using freeform descriptions to measure image. Attributes are not specified at the onset of the research but rather the respondent is allowed to more freely describe impressions of the destination product. Depending on the specific characteristics of an individual the images he or she forms will be different. Consequently, there is no single perceived image of destination; rather, it is associated with each individual consumer. Hence, this emerging research strand shows that images are place specific and dynamic, and a combination of structured and un-structured methodologies is useful in measuring destination image (Echtner& Ritchie, 1991).In particular, age, gender, nationality, frequency of visitation, and purpose of visit tend to influence visitors' decision-making processes and their on-site evaluations of the place. For this reason, segmentation of markets has been the cornerstone of successful destination marketing and tourism product development.

1.3 Correlation of push and pull factors

Frequently, while making research, results have shown that push and pull factors are very different factors –and are made at different situations (Kim, 2008). Push factors are decisions we make while thinking whether or not to go on a vacation, while pull factors are the ones which make us think of the destination. Internal motivations push the tourist to travel, leading to an external search for an appropriate tourist destination. Pull factors then come into effect by making the tourist that a particular place is suitable for them. Therefore, it would be reasonable to say that push factors are leading pull factors (Dann, 1977). Although, many researchers state that push and pull factors should not be viewed as separate factors. Neither should they be reviews as related forces. (Baloglu and Uysal, 1996). While internal motivations

propel ('push') a tourist to travel, external forces such as destination attributes and facilities concurrently 'pull' the potential tourist to choose the destination. Which means that, once the decision to travel has been made, the tourist then considers the vast array of destinations and their pull factors that correspond to their motivational needs (Dann, 1977)

2. Research Methodology

In the following chapter the research methodology, research implementation process and the qualitative and quantities methods will be explained.

2.1 Qualitative and quantitative research methods

Qualitative methods of data gathering and analysis have gained popularity over the years. Traditionally, it has been the method used by researchers to build theory, although is not the case of every one of them, as knowledge manifests itself in many forms (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Following Strauss and Corbin (1998), qualitative research means "any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or means of quantification" That means that this methodology is focused on issues that quantitative research approach does not cover, such as lived experiences, behaviors, emotions, feelings as well as social movements, cultural phenomena, interactions among groups, etc. It means collecting data from interviews and observations with the aim of finding out new concepts or relationships and organize them in a framework, model or theory basis. In order to carry out a quantitative research, quantitative data is needed. According to Gray et al (2003) quantitative data use numbers to describe what exists, and the benefit arising from that methodology is the fact that the data may be fed into a computer where they can be counted, stored, and manipulated; however, numbers are often a poor substitute for a researcher's vivid descriptions. Moreover, there is a tendency to consider quantitative data collected as scientific facts while it is a technique like any other that can have potential errors at the time of its measure.

2.2 Questionnaire surveys

According to Brace (2004), questionnaires are a useful tool when resources are limited it is quite cheap to administer. At the same time, it is not as time- consuming as for example interviews, moreover if the questionnaire is self- completed using methods such as email or postal surveys. In addition to that, one of its basic characteristics is the privacy of respondents, a key factor to the respondents answer freely and honestly. Finally, it is the perfect secondary tool to confirm previous findings on the field of study.

2.3 The research methodology and implementation process

The interviews were conducted between the dates 13th – 18th of March, 2015. Based on our theoretical framework and the research questions we composed the survey questions, which were fourteen (14) questions that were prepared in advance and also some additional questions if it was necessary. The respondents were contacted in person, as well as, online, which means through e-mail, Facebook and other social media. In total ninety-six people were contacted, and out of those eighty-three people agreed on participating. They had always been told about the aim of the research in advance, and that their identities and information will be kept anonymous.

The aim of this study is primarily focusing on a tourist group who have visited Georgia before. The respondents' ages ranged between 17 and 68. They were chosen for the research amongst Azerbaijani people who not only have Azerbaijan nationality, but are also native Azerbaijan. However, that was not the only criteria, the respondents being native Azerbaijan the respondents had to fulfill the requirement of having some type of travel history.
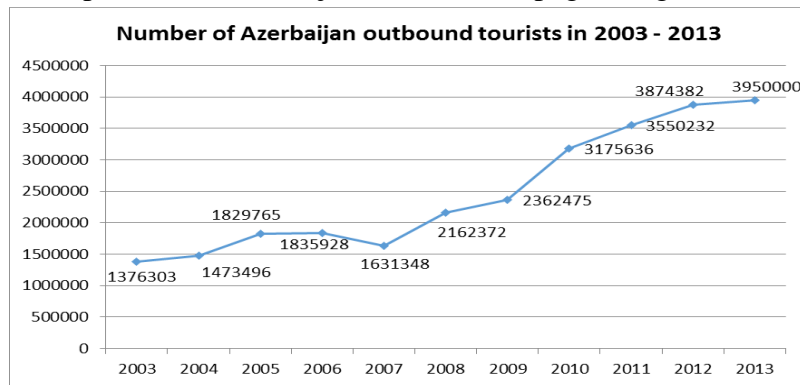
The survey questions are formed of three different parts. The first sets of questions are to collect data of the respondent's traveling habits and history. The purpose of these questions is to determine the respondent's traveling patterns and information related to that. Another purpose is also to figure out which factors affected them to travel to Georgia. The rest of questions are inquired satisfaction of visitors and evaluation of the trip. Last six questions were about demographic site of our respondents. The data collected from the survey will be analyzed according to the theoretical framework in the next chapter.

3. Azerbaijan tourists' motivation factors to travel to Georgia

This chapter is intended to create the image of Azerbaijan outbound tourists and find out the factors which are affecting tourists to choose Georgia as a holiday destination.

3.1 Characteristics of Azerbaijan outbound tourists

The secondary data for this study was collected from the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan online web page. A generalization has been made due to the similarities in traveling behaviors and habits among the Caucasus countries. Therefore, we mainly refer to the tourists as Azerbaijan considering the primary data research being conducted on native Azerbaijani. (Fig 1)

Figure 1: Outbound Tourists of Azerbaijan

As we can see in the graph every year Azerbaijan tourists are more willing to travel abroad for leisure purpose. According to the official statistics the top three destinations for Azerbaijani tourists are Turkey, followed by Georgia and after Russia. (The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan).

3.2 Analyses of factors to choose Georgia as a tourism destination

This particular chapter will summarize the main findings extracted from the quantitative methods used to analyze the subject under study. Data obtained throughout the questionnaire will be analyzed, and the results will be explained using the tables for creating a clear picture of the results. In total, 83 questionnaire forms were responded through online by residents and also non-residents of Azerbaijan.

Variables	Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	45	54%
	Female	38	46%
Marital Status	Single	31	37%
	Married	39	47%
	Divorced	11	13%
	Widowed	2	3%
Age	Under 18	2	2%
	18-24	13	16%
	25-34	18	22%
	35-44	23	28%
	45-54	15	18%
	55-64	9	11%
	Older than 64	3	3%
Level of education	School until 9th grade-	2	2%
	High school graduate, diploma	25	30%

	Bachelor's degree	47	57%
	Master's degree	9	11%
	Doctorate degree	0	0

Table 1: Demographic question and the results obtained

As seen from the demographic questions (Table 1) it can be concluded that:

Number of the female respondents is thirty eight- or 46%, and the number of the male respondents is forty five, which is 54% of the total amount of the respondents.

Thirty one (37%) of the respondents were single, thirty nine (47%) are married, eleven (13%) are divorced, and only two (3%) are widowed.

Only two persons (2%) were under 18, and the opposite elderly people whose age is more than 64- just 3 (3%), the biggest part consisted of mostly middle aged people 23 persons (28%) whose age ranged between 35-44; and 18 persons (22%) ages between 25-34, and the rest 15 persons (18%) were between 45-54; 13 young people (16%) who were 18-24; and 9 persons (11%) whose age was between 55-64.

47 persons (57%) has the Bachelor's degree; followed by the ones who just completed the high school- 25 persons (30%); after that people who have obtained the Master's degree who are 9 persons (11%), 2 persons (2%) that have only obtained the education until the 9th grade, and no people with the Doctorate degree.

Variables	Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Attendance to Georgia	Yes	69	83%
	No	14	17%
Partner during the trip	Family	27	33%
	Partner	22	26%
	Parents	10	12%
	Friends	13	16%
	Alone	7	8%
	Travel Group	4	5%
Purpose of the travel	Holidays and leisure	41	49%
	Family togetherness	10	12%
	Shopping	6	7%
	Studies	4	5%
	Visiting friends, relatives	12	15%
	Business	7	8%
	Other	3	4%
Factors affecting the choice	Weather	15	18%
	Price	13	16%
	Nearby location	10	12%
	History and heritage	6	7%
	Religion	4	5%
	Ease of access	19	23%
	Recommendations of the others	9	11%
	Tour operators/travel agencies	7	8%
Duration of the trip	1 nights	4	5%
	2-3 nights	9	11%
	4-7 nights	22	26%
	8-14 nights	27	32%
	14-21 nights	13	16%
	More than 21 nights	8	10%
Transportation used during the trip	Plane	3	4%
	Train	41	49%

	Couch	25	30%
	Personal car	14	17%
Tip organization	By phone or email	11	13%
	Travel agency/tour operator	33	40%
	Online reservation system	8	10%
	Was not booked in advance	12	14%
	Other	19	23%
Were your expectancies met?	Yes	69	83%
	No	14	17%

Table 2: Main questions and the data obtained

The data obtained from the main questions is the following (Table 2)

69 of the respondents (83%) answered that they have been to Georgia once or more, the rest of them 14 persons (17%) said that they have never been to Georgia, but they would like to visit Georgia.

27 persons were with their families (33%), followed by 22 persons (26%) who travelled with their partners; 13 persons (16%) who travelled with their friends; 10 persons (12%) travelled with their parents; only 4 persons (5%) who travelled with the tourist group; and just 7 persons (8%) who travelled alone, explaining it with the fact of it being a business trip.

When respondents were asked about the purpose of their trip to determine the push factors 41 of the respondents (49%) said that they travelled to Georgia with the holiday and leisure purpose; whereas 12 persons (15%) travelled for visiting their friends and relatives; followed by 10 respondents (12%) who travelled for the family togetherness to spend good time with beloved ones; 7 of them (8%) travelled for the business purpose; 6 persons (7%) for the shopping; only 4 persons (5%) has travelled for the studying purpose; and the rest of them – which means 3 persons (4%) has travelled for the other reasons.

The respondents were asked question about the factors which affected them when having a trip to Georgia in order to determine pull factors, the biggest factor appeared to be the ease access answered by 19 persons (23%), next factor is the weather, said by 15 persons (18%); affordable price according to 13 persons (16%); 9 persons (11%) were affected by the recommendations of others; 7 of the respondents (8%) were affected of the tour operators/ travel agencies; history and heritage and the culture were the factors attracting tourists as well according to 6 persons (7%); and finally religion ,according to 4 of the respondents (5%).

41 persons (49%) travelled via train; followed by the couch by 25 persons (30%); after that most used transportation is the personal car of the respondents- 14 persons (17%) and the least used kind of transportation is the plane- as it was used by only 3 persons (4%) because of the high prices of the flight tickets.The longest trips were 8-14 nights according to 27 respondents (32%); followed by 22 persons (26%) answering 4-7 nights; 13 persons (16%) answered 14-21 nights; 8 persons (10%) who stayed more than 21 nights- most of them were the ones who is studying in Georgia; and the rest 4 persons (5%) has stayed only for 1 nights.

33 respondents (40%) have organized their trip via travel agency/ tour operator; 19 persons (23%) has chosen the option 'Other' relying on the VFR factor, and students who are living in the dormitories, 12 persons (14%) have not booked anything in advance; 11 persons (13%) have booked in advance by phone or e-mail and only 8 persons (10%) have booked online.

69 of the respondents (83%) totally agreed on the fact that their expectations were met by the destination. However, the rest of the respondents – 14 persons (17%) said that they were dissatisfied in means of the expectations.

Conclusions:

1. From intense analysis of given material, it can be concluded that there are certain issues that are preventing the tourists from visiting Georgia from Azerbaijan. First and most recent that should be mentioned is the unstable political situation nowadays in Georgia. Recently, we hear lots of news about the current political situation and the revolutionary strikes are scaring the tourists. Also, the activities that happened between Russia and Georgia a couple years ago have affected the destination image of Ossetia and Abkhazia: Those regions are currently unsafe places for the tourists.

2. Second main issue would be the transportation. As it's possible to travel from Azerbaijan to Georgia by either by coach, train or plane. The most popular kind of transportation used by the tourists is the train, because of its price and the timetable, as it departs from the evening and arrives to Tbilisi in the early morning, so that people travelling there don't lose any time, and have more time to explore the city. But the issue related to this train is its condition. It has very poor conditions, the trains themselves are very old, narrow and very extremely slow, which is quite uncomfortable for the people who will be travelling all night. Also, it has to be mentioned that there are situation which are happening too frequently, the trains depart off schedule, which is also not the best situation to be at.

3. The last, but the not the least would be flights between Baku and Tbilisi. Although it's not very long destination to travel by the plane, the flight tickets from Baku to Tbilisi and vice versa are unbelievably high- almost 10 times higher than the train or bus tickets, when the train tickets cost only 20 Euros, the plane tickets are usually almost 200 Euros. The travelers tend to desire to spend less time and money to travel, while in this situation, people have to pay ridiculously big money for the trip that is only going to last two hours.

Recommendations:

1. As for the first issue, the recommendation would be the creation of safe and secure atmosphere for the locals and the tourists, by informing the tourists in advance where to travel and what to do and who to contact in case of emergency. In addition to all those mentioned above the tourists should be provided with the life insurance.

2. When it comes to the second issue, the only way to solve the problem would be renewing the trains and make them more advanced and comfortable for both staff and the passengers. The system should be changed as well; it has to be more organized. No trains shall be late when it comes to be departed or being arrived, because that is extremely unprofessional and unorganized behavior, which creates negative feedback and high level of dissatisfaction amongst the tourists.

3. Finally, for the last conclusion the recommendations can happen in two options. The first recommendation would be lowering the prices for the flight tickets. And the second recommendation would be creating low cost airlines flights, so that people can travel to the destination they want by paying less money and wasting less amount of money.

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