AZERBAIJAN OUTBOUND TOURISTS' SATISFACTION AFTER VISITING TURKEY AS A HOLIDAY DESTINATION

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Abstract

Many factors are involved in the decision of choosing a summer holiday destination. The climate, a general sense of safety, the quality of swimming water and beaches or the number of tourists attractions are examples of the aspects which maybe considered when deciding where to take a long summer holiday. The aim of this research is "To evaluate satisfaction of Azerbaijan outbound tourists after visiting Turkey as a holiday destination" by analyzing tourist satisfaction with questionnaires and tourism agencies.

Introduction

Azerbaijan is located in the south-eastern part of the Transcaucasian region, western Asia. It borders to the north - with Russia, in the north-west - with Georgia in the south - with Iran, in the west - with Armenia, in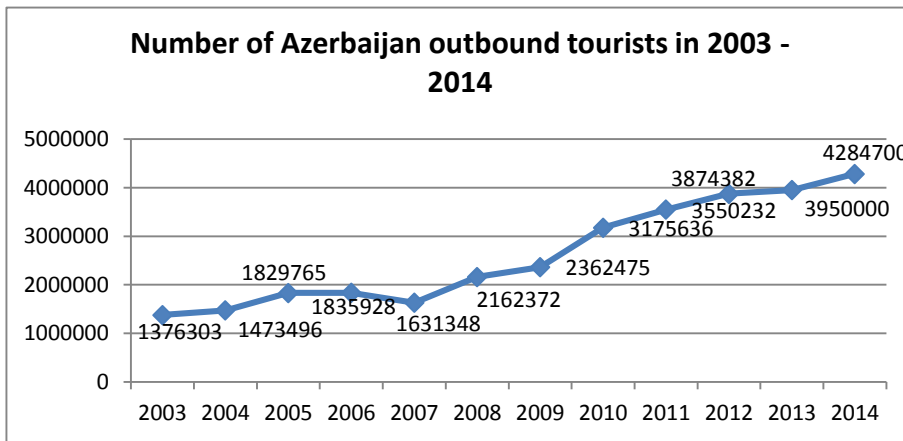 the extreme south-west - with Turkey. In the east it is washed by the Caspian Sea. Its area is 86 600 sq. m. km. In addition to the mainland it composes of numerous small islands of the Caspian Sea (Baku and Absheron archipelago). Income level in the Caucasian countries is not so high – and a normal percentage of the income is spent on travelling. But its clearly seen that Azerbaijan tourists' per capita travel spending is the highest in the Caucasian countries, the tendency to travel abroad more regular than that of any other tourist group in the this region.

Figure 1. Number of Azerbaijan outbound tourists in 2003-2014
Source: Annual report of Ministry of Tourism and Culture of Azerbaijan in 2013

In 2014, Azerbaijani made 4.284 million different travel abroad. The number increased by 2 percent from 2013. Every year Azerbaijan tourists are more willing to travel abroad for leisure purpose. In 2014, Turkey being evidently the most popular destination among the Azerbaijan tourists, Russia takes the second place in the highest number of trips overseas and the third highest after Russia coming UAE. (The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan).

In 2013, arrivals of Azerbaijan tourists increased 5 percent from last year. It's clear seen that Turkey is most popular destinations among Azerbaijan. Our respondents mentioned Turkey is easy accessible and comfortable for us because the same language, nationality and the same government system like transport. Total arrivals of tourists to Turkey is 34million in 2013 and 1.8% of them are Azerbaijan tourists with different purpose. The statistics show that the warmer border countries are the most popular destinations for the residents of Azerbaijan tourist; however, destinations such as France, United Kingdom, Germany, and Italy are increasing in popularity.
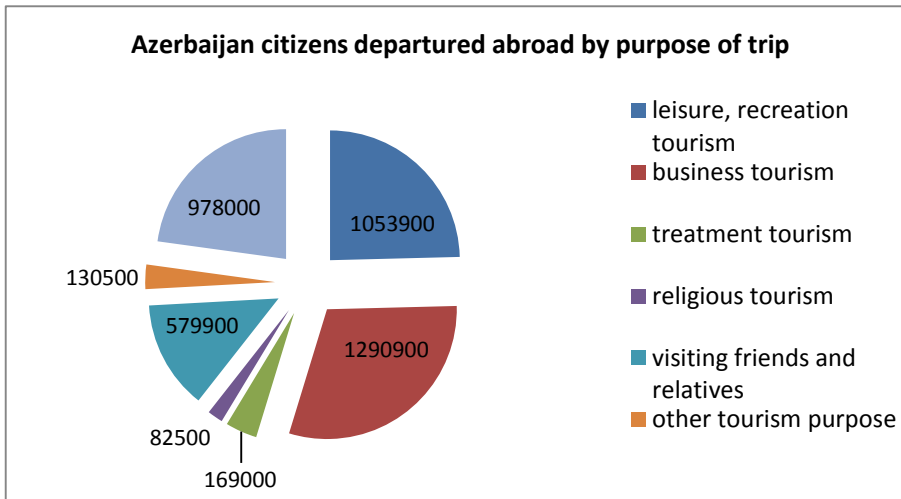

Azerbaijan citizens departured abroad by purpose of trip

- leisure, recreation tourism
- business tourism
- treatment tourism
- religious tourism
- visiting friends and relatives
- other tourism purpose

978000
1053900
130500
579900
1290900
82500
169000

Figure 3. Departing Visitors from Azerbaijan to abroad by Purpose of Visit by tourists in numbers.
Source: The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan: Tourism and services in Azerbaijan, 2014.

The statistics show that the warmer border countries are the most popular destinations for the residents of Azerbaijan tourist. This means the importance of leisure trip to Azerbaijan tourists when choosing Turkey as a holiday destination. After that business trips took 2nd place following is visiting relatives and friends, it consists of 15% of all tourists.

Theoretical Framework

1. Concept of Tourist Satisfaction

It is indicated in tourism literature that both the tourists' overall satisfaction and desire to revisit are determined by his or her evaluation of the destination's unique attributes. Cove (2007) argues that satisfaction is based on good feelings that enable the visitors to relive the experience gained at the destination. These good feelings could be manifested through sensory pleasures, enjoyment, and daydreams (Nicolau and Mas, 2008). Researches consider tourist satisfaction as an emotional response that is derived from travelling experience (Nicolau, and Más, (2008). According to cognitive approach, satisfaction is the tourist's response to link between performance and standard of comparison. In this point of view, expectancy disconfirmation model is employed mostly (Dwyer, Forsyth and Rao (2000). This model points out that cognitive judgment have an important role in formation of satisfaction formation and predictive expectation. Cognitive affective view has been proposed recently, where the visitor satisfaction is affected by his or her cognitive evaluation and emotions gained from consumption experience. Finally, destination loyalty in regard to destination image is the main aspect of satisfaction (Brady and Robertson, 2001; Yu and Dean, 2001).

Pike (2004) and Van Dolen, de Ruyter, and Lemmink (2004) posit that cognitive system and emotional evaluation of a destination is pivotal in satisfaction formation. They argue that the higher the mental process of understanding and evaluation performed by cognitive system, the higher the rate of satisfaction formation. However, emotions are related to individual's feelings towards the destination and services received (Hsu, Tsai, and Wu, 2009). If the nature of a destination meets or exceeds consumer's expectations, then satisfaction is realized and hence a need to revisit because of developed loyalty. Moreover, disconfirmation of expectations has been postulated by Lai, Griffin, and Babin (2009) as an attribute of satisfaction. It is an individual's post-destination experience cognition that the product performed better or worse than expected (Chon, 2006). Ideally, if the performance of destination was higher than expectations, then a positive disconfirmation is realized. However, if performance of a destination is way below consumer's expectations, a negative disconfirmation occurs. In case the travel experience to a destination results to mixed perceived performance and beliefs, consumers normally exaggerate their evaluations as a result of contrast or surprise (Sirgy, and Su, 2000).

1.2 Dimension of Tourist Satisfaction

The quality of tourism products and services given in a tourism destination has a major impact in tourism satisfaction (Pride, 2004). Dwyer, Forsyth and Rao (2000) argued that tourism destination can develop high level of consumer satisfaction and consumer loyalty through delivery of premium service quality. In a very competitive tourism environment, the status of tourism destination depends entirely on its perceived quality of services (Govers, Go, and Kumar, 2007). Jang and Feng, (2007) identified five major dimensions of service quality that encourage greater customer\ satisfaction: First is reliability, which is the ability to carry out services accurately and in timely manner. The second dimension is that of responsiveness. Here, the destination tourism agencies should be willing to help visitors and provide prompt services. Thirdly, is assurance where the employees should be able to relay trust and confidence. The fourth dimension is empathy which involves provision of caring, individualized attention to tourists. The fifth dimension is tangibles-the appearance of physical facilities, personnel, equipment, and communication materials.

Additionally, the overall satisfaction of the tourists is influenced by price and the perceived value of the products and services offered (Kotler, Bowen, and Makens, (2006). Lee, (2009) posits that price must be greater than cost to deter quality deterioration, since high prices are sometimes interpreted as indicators of premium quality. Nevertheless, high quality does not imply maximizing profits but reducing the likelihood of quality deterioration. Forgas, Moliner, Sánchez, and Palau, (2010) postulated that the higher the quality of services offered for the price offered, the higher the value as perceived by consumers. In order to make a tourist destination competitive, the services and products offered should be not only of higher quality than those of similar destinations but the pricing should be competitive and perceived as commensurate to the perceived value of products and services offered (Decrop, 1999).

1.3 Approaches to Measuring Customer Satisfaction in Tourism

In tourism, consumer satisfaction is assessed through analyzing features of tourism offers. Tourism scholars come up with various destination attributes and ask respondents to evaluate them on a scale. The scale ranges from, from 'very satisfied' to 'not satisfied at all' (Fuchs and Weiermar, 2003). These elements are then monitored individually, added

up, or assigned to specific dimensions of a construct which measures tourists' level of satisfaction (for instance factor analysis) .The major goal in measuring tourist satisfaction is to aid managerial decisions. Fuchs and Weiermar (2003) indicate that those models in which destination attributes are correlated (or regressed) to a variable which measures overall satisfaction with the destination yields more accurate managerial implications than those models that utilize only one destination attribute.

Evaluation of overall satisfaction through features of a tourism offer has several shortcomings. First, tourists (consumers) are unable to evaluate comprehensively the features of product offering and are forced to add their own interpretations which are inaccurate (Beerli, and Martin, (2004). Second, tourists do not sum up their assessments of each feature and do not provide accurate weight to every feature, as assumed by cumulative scale that is always employed in such perspective. Third, in case customer satisfaction is based on attributes of a destination, the score calculated depends on the choice of attributes that are included in the instrument used in measuring (Fuchs, and Weiermar, 2003).

1.4 Structural Relationship between Destination Image and Visitor Satisfaction

Destination image comprises of various attributes which influences consumer satisfaction. These attributes can either be controllable (price, destination product, promotion and place) or uncontrollable (destination characteristics) (Govers, Go, and Kumar, 2007). Tourism managers use these attributes to stimulate the positive perception of the destination. However, it is vital to understand potential tourists' expectations concerning the destination since it helps in creating positional strategies which are used to modify the image (Hsu, Tsai, and Wu, 2009). Destination image affects tourists in the process of selecting a destination and planning their future visits. It also exercises a positive impact on quality and satisfaction. A positive destination image encourages more visits and hence greater customer satisfaction. Tourist satisfaction drastically improves if the destination image is positive (Beerli, and Martín, 2004).

Kotler, Bowen, and Makens (1996) established the following pattern: image-quality-satisfaction-post purchase intention. They postulated that image influences how consumers perceive quality: a more positive image leads to higher perceived quality. Perceived quality, will, in turn affect the level of satisfaction of consumers since satisfaction is as a result of consumers' evaluation of perceived quality. The relationship between customer satisfaction and post-purchase (revisit intention) has been well evaluated by previous literature (Jang, and Feng, 2007).

2. Research methodology

The aim of quantitative research comprises of collection and analyses of statistically verifiable data involving the persistent use of sampling techniques. The researcher can apply the findings of the representative sample survey to the entire market, because the participants of the survey are thought to be representing the entire population being researched. Quantitative research is generally objective, and uses deduction and numbers; therefore results gotten can be generalized (Lumsdon, 1997, p. 130).

2.1 The Design of the Questionnaire

A tourist' satisfaction survey was designed and distributed in the autumn season of 2015 to determine the overall level of Azerbaijan tourists' satisfaction, who visited Turkey. The self of structured questionnaire consisted of three sections. These questions were, then,

measured by Likert scale that ranged from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (Very satisfied). Most of the previous studies focused on similar issues that are, also, related to tourist's satisfaction for example (Yu & Goulden, 2006; Gonzálezet al., 2007; Gountas & Gountas, 2007).

2.2 Sampling and Data Collection Procedures

Two methods were used for data collection. The first is two tourism agents who specially focused on outbound tourist to Turkey, Millenium & Tourism Congress DMC and Turizm.az travel agent. These travel agents, which were used to collect data from the tourists, especially, from tourists who have visited Turkey for a holiday and relaxation purposes. The second method is face to face procedures of tourists and sending online survey to tourists who have been in Turkey before. The respondents were contacted through the online and motivating them to take part in the research. Such a process took over two-three weeks period of data collection from the 25th of February to 14th of March 2015. In additions, these two agents are most knowing tourism companies that specialized on sale tour packages to national tourist to outside of the country. The respondents' ages ranged between 18 and 65. They were chosen for the research within a population of Azerbaijan people who not only have Azerbaijan nationality but are also native Azerbaijanis. Besides being native Azerbaijan the respondents had to fulfill the requirement of having some type of travel history. In addition, all respondents were informed about this questionnaire and were asked if they like to participate in this survey. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed within 2-3 weeks period, and 148 were returned and the total questionnaires analyzed in this study were 118.

3. Analysis of Azerbaijan tourists satisfaction

Due to the low number of participants the data collected from the questionnaire. Data collected throughout the questionnaire tool has been. The quantitative research methods carried out have been analyzed in order to identify the important information, not only the large amount of information provided by the interviewees but also the participant observation developed by the researcher.

Altogether 118 questionnaire forms were responded through the help of travel agents and online and by residents of Azerbaijan. Questions "Age", "marital status" and "gender" are giving a possibility to build up a demographic profile of respondents.

Table 1 Respondents' profile

Variable		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	77	65%
	Female	41	35%
Age Group	Under 18	2	2%
	18 – 24	6	5%
	25 – 34	27	23%
	35 – 44	41	35%
	45 – 54	26	22%
	55 – 64	12	10%
	Over 64	4	3%
Marital status	Single	38	32%
	Married	50	42%
	Divorced	26	22%
	Widowed	4	4%
Duration of trip	1 – 5	45	38%

	6 – 10	34	29%
	11 – 15	20	17%
	16 Over	19	16%
Motivations travel to Turkey	Leisure and recreation holidays	43	36%
	Visiting friends and relatives	22	19%
	Business	30	24%
	Sightseeing	19	16%
	Other	5	4%

Seventy-seven (77) of all the respondents were male and 41 female, which makes it 65 percent male respondents and 34 percent females. Anyhow, it is not possible to say that more males are visiting Turkey, but this shows that they are more willing to participate in this Survey. Middle-aged people were dominating among other age groups. Thirty-two point two (32.2) percent of respondents were in the mid-thirties, and forties, age group 35-44. This segment of travelers is economically stable, has savings and while travelling ready to spend money (figure 2). According to the given answers, twenty-one (21) respondents were single, 28 of them were married, ten of them were divorced and only two of them were widowed. Thirty seven percent of total respondents which is the large part for this question have answered that they have stayed at Turkey less than 5 nights. And it makes us clearly to see the average of Azerbaijanis' tourist have spent from 5 – 7 nights in trip. And these who have stayed in Turkey particularly from 15 nights, have visited their relatives or friends and specially have stayed at their home. Azerbaijan outbound tourists choose Turkey for their "leisure and recreation" purposes and they've been affected by relaxation and convenience of facilities push factors. Thirty-six point forty-four (36.44) percent of respondents choose "holidays and leisure" option for this question. In general, these two push reasons: relaxation and business are common factors between Azerbaijan outbound tourists when choosing Turkey to travelling

Table 2 Measuring of Azerbaijani tourists' satisfaction

Touristic product and destination	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Fair	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Facilities for children	8%	11%	31%	33%	17%
guided excursions and tours	5%	25%	31%	25%	14%
sport facilities and activities	8%	16%	31%	26%	19%
facilities on beaches	9%	14%	32%	24%	20%
Airport factors					
Speed of check-in and check-out at the destination airport	3%	22%	31%	22%	22%
Cleanliness of the destination airport	8%	19%	33%	31%	8%
facilities and services at destination airport	11%	14%	17%	47%	11%
Existence of information Centres	6%	31%	25%	25%	14%
Host Attitude					
Friendliness of local residents	8%	14%	28%	33%	17%
Attitude of local shop and staff	5%	24%	31%	32%	8%
Responsiveness to customer complaints	17%	25%	19%	22%	17%
Feelings of personal safety	9%	20%	28%	31%	12%
Road Transport					
Comfort of local transport services	14%	14%	22%	31%	19%
Network (accessibility) of local transport services	8%	21%	39%	22%	10%
Attitude of local drivers	6%	14%	28%	35%	17%
Taxi services	19%	25%	25%	22%	8%
Accommodation and Catering					

Quality of food	14%	19%	19%	31%	17%
Quality standard of accommodation	13%	17%	33%	29%	8%
Cleanliness of accommodation	14%	17%	31%	29%	9%
Level of hygiene and sanitation	18%	24%	25%	22%	11%
Pricing					
Level of attractions prices	6%	14%	28%	36%	17%
Level of souvenir and gift prices	11%	16%	42%	25%	7%
Value for money	8%	19%	25%	33%	14%
Level of local transportation prices	11%	19%	23%	33%	13%
Natural Environment and Entertainment – Communication					
Environmental quality	8%	17%	14%	36%	25%
Cleanliness of beaches and sea	15%	19%	31%	23%	12%
Attractiveness of natural environment	6%	19%	22%	31%	22%
Availability of restaurants	8%	14%	25%	39%	14%
Availability of shopping facilities	2%	19%	37%	22%	20%
Availability of nightlife and entertainment	7%	19%	27%	28%	18%
Level of language communication	0%	1%	13%	36%	50%
Overall Satisfaction	8%	11%	19%	39%	22%

Table 2 indicates the satisfaction level of Azerbaijani tourists' for different factors of tourism. It's clearly seen that Azerbaijanis are mostly fair with tourism product of Turkey. But here it's seen that, Nine point thirty (9.30) percent have answered very dissatisfied on "facilities on beaches" criteria, one of the respondent have mentioned that public beaches are so dirty. Azerbaijan tourists mostly have answered "satisfied" for "facilities and services at destination airport" in Turkey, it's forty-seven point two percent (47.2) of total answers. Mostly dissatisfied twenty-five percent (25) and very dissatisfied sixteen point seven percent (16.7) were on the "responsiveness to customer complaints". At the same time, dissatisfaction level was twenty point four percent (20.4) for "feelings of personal safety and security". In overall, "Accommodation and catering" satisfaction level was mostly chosen between "fair and satisfied". "Fair and satisfied" options were most common of Azerbaijanis tourist satisfaction towards to pricing. Overall satisfaction of Azerbaijanis' tourist after visited Turkey thirty nine percent (39) of total respondents were satisfied with their trips. Nineteen point four percent (19.4) of total respondents were fair in their trips. Azerbaijanis tourists were more "very satisfied" than "fair". Just eleven point one percent of respondents were dissatisfied and eight percent of respondents were very dissatisfied and they clarify that there were problems such as health and other.
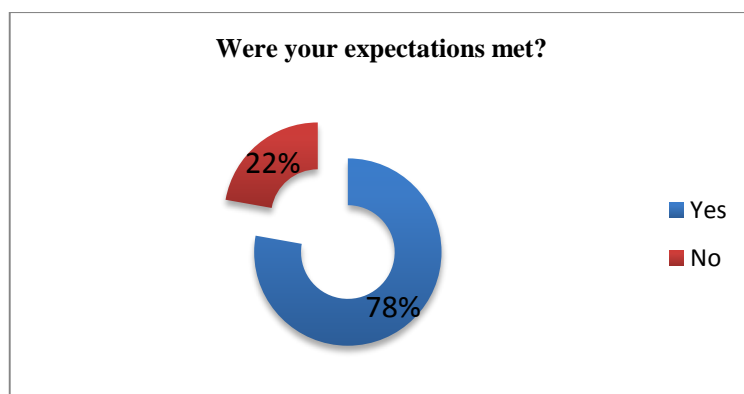

Figure 4 Expectations approved

Seventy-eight percent (78) of total respondents have answered that their expectations were met. But only twenty-two percents of respondents said that their expectations weren't met. It's clearly seen from figure 19, the majority of Azerbaijan outbound tourists were satisfied with their trips and their expectations were approved.

Conclusion and discussion

From this research it's clearly seen that Azerbaijan outbound tourists going to Turkey by airline and bus. Actually, currently there is no any railway from Baku to Istanbul. Despite the fact there are a lot of a big amount of Azerbaijani tourists travelling to Turkey, there's only two types of transport to that destination: airlines and coach. Therefore, that creates density and makes Azerbaijanis dissatisfied with trip. Although there's a bus from Baku to Istanbul and the opposite every day, the density still exists. Especially, the scarcity of buses driving to the touristic zones puts some issues on the way of the tourists. The result also confirms that, Azerbaijani tourists were very dissatisfied to "Responsiveness to customer complaints" (17%) and (19%)"Taxi service". And finally, there was seventeen point nine percent (17.9) of total Azerbaijani have answered very dissatisfied to "level of hygiene and sanitation" in Accommodation and catering part. In general most of dissatisfaction level has come from services and facilities of destination. But their level was lower than fair and satisfied numbers. The research also confirms that "personal safety and security" was also dissatisfied Azerbaijani tourist while traveling to Turkey. Dissatisfaction level of tourist for "personal safety and security" mostly has chosen by women. Women respondents have answered that women did not feel free in the night time because of drunks and unconscious men.

This research suggests that Azerbaijani tourism companies, associations and ministries should expand their relations with Turkish ministries and work together for building the railroads between two countries so that would cause bigger amount of tourists visit Turkey. The transport has taken big part of tourism and tourist satisfaction, if the transport would be easy accessible and cheaper then tourist satisfaction will be higher and there will be more revisits to Turkey.

The research suggests that Azerbaijanis tourist who wishes to visit Turkey should learn some information before going to accommodation and destination. It's important to have some general idea where you are going and what is prohibited and what is not. Additionally, tourism agencies or tourism companies should also help Azerbaijani to choose best options of their trips. This also helps tourist to satisfy with travel, so, he or she has general information about destination and already know how to act in some situations or politely and how to act to culture heritages. This research also suggest that travel companies should inform the tourists that who want to go from Azerbaijan to Turkey, and explain them what regions are dangerous to travel, and which are not. They should be informed, about what to do in emergency cases, and should be informed the nearest Azerbaijani embassies and consulates to their tourist destination. This will help tourist feel safe and satisfied while visiting Turkey. It could be also suggested to professionally support each of the Azerbaijani tourists, to solve any problems, including problems related to crime and others during trip.

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