

TRENDS IN THE GROWTH OF TOURIST FLOWS FROM AZERBAIJAN TO GEORGIA

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ABSTRACT:

It is the fact that the geographical structure of tourism in Georgia is such that neighboring countries occupy the leading positions in the top ten. It is noteworthy that there is a growing trend of tourist flows from Azerbaijan, which can make a significant contribution to the further development of economic relations between Georgia and Azerbaijan. Consequently, quantitative analysis of tourist flows from these countries is urgent and necessary. Since at the modern stage of economic development, tourism is an important source of development and economic growth for Georgia. Research methods. Methods of statistical observation, grouping and analysis were used in the research process. The computer program SPSS was used to process and analyze the results of the study. Conclusion: There is a tendency to increase tourist flows from Azerbaijan to Georgia; Most visitors come to Georgia for leisure; The main places to visit are Tbilisi Batumi, Signaghi, Borjomi, Bakuriani, etc.

Keywords: visitor, analysis, trend, attractive, statistics

Jel classification: C1

1. INTRODUCTION

Georgia and Azerbaijan are striving to boost tourism numbers with new projects and activities that are planned for increasing tourists flow into the region, improving touristic infrastructure and services.

Both countries have huge potential for implementing joint projects to further develop and support tourism in the region. As for tourism ties between Georgia and Azerbaijan, the statistics show that Georgia is one of the most favourable destinations for Azerbaijani tourists.

Today, the globalization has become a crucial issue in the everyday political, economic, social and cultural life. From the strategic point of view, it is very important for Georgia to enhance the world trade - economic, financial and other kinds of relations, especially when it is in the foreign interests of the country to share the advanced European values and experiences and join the European Union. (Quliyev A., Abesadze, O., Amanova, L., 2019)

Azerbaijan-Georgia relations are quite multifaceted, it is characterized by strategy and positive dynamics. Such relations are important not only for these two countries, but for the whole region. Clearly, this also applies to the flow of tourist between the two countries. It is a fact that at the modern stage of economic development, tourism is an important source of development and economic growth for Georgia. Therefore, domestic tourism contributes to the stability of the national economy, development and unity of the economy sectors which are traditional for the country, have enough resources and in turn, contribute to the overall stability of the economy. (Paresashvili, N., Okruashvili, N., Chitaladze, Q., 2017).

Georgia is a country very rich in natural beauty, with an extensive history and culture. Georgia has also many natural heritage products, such as the mountain resorts such as Borjomi, Abastumani, Tskaltubo, Sairme and so on. People often visit these places not only for the unique nature, but for the exceptional air and water quality, which some believe can cure different deceases. Another popular destination is the sea resort Ureki with its course dark sands with magnetic properties which are also said to treat health problems. The country also has winter resorts such as Gudauri and Bakuriani, with abundant annual snowfalls, which are popular destination or tourists and skiers, as well as natural gorges and delightful waterfalls, attracting local and international trekkers and nature-lovers. (Abesadze, N., Kinkladze, R., Paresashvili N., 2019)

However, this does not mean that all challenges are overcome in this regard. The challenges facing tourism are certainly those that are part of the country's economic policy. Effective policy requires the development of a package of correct recommendations based on adequate assessments, which should be implemented on the basis of the relevant information base. We believe that it is important to pay attention to such regions where the tourist flows are growing constantly and the supply is overturned by demand. (Paresashvili, N., Chitaladze, K., 2019).

So it is important to estimate events in a tourism field, detect trends and determine statistical rules. For this purpose we need objective information that requires perfect adaptation of international techniques of statistical accounting of tourism and practical implementation of these techniques on-site.(Abesadze,N., Mindorashvili, M., Paresashvili, n., 2017).

The database of tourism statistics in Georgia is becoming more and more complete, which creates the conditions for statistical analysis of tourism processes in the country and to determine the quantitative characteristics of tourism. As a result, development trends and regularities will be identified, and relevant reasoned conclusions will be drawn.

The purpose and objectives of the study. The aim of the study is to provide a statistical analysis of the growth of tourist flows from Azerbaijan and the level of attractiveness of the country against the background of the main trends in terms of tourism in Azerbaijan, taking into account all the factors that affect the development of tourism in Georgia. Accordingly, the following tasks were set and solved: The main trends in tourism development are detection; Defining the geographical structure of Azerbaijan; Identify the growing trends of international tourism in Georgia from Azerbaijan to Georgia. Methods of data observation, grouping, and analysis were used in the research process. The generalized indicators were calculated based on the mean values, variation, and time analyzes.

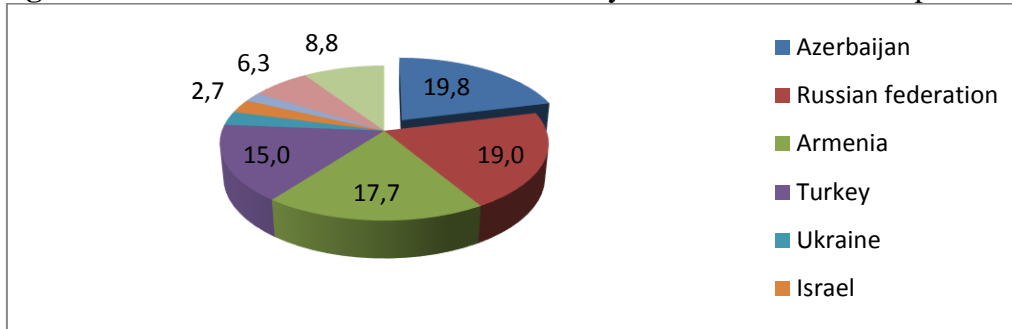
2. THE MAIN TRENDS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM FROM AZERBAIJAN TO GEORGIA

The fact is that over the years, both segments of the tourism market have not been fully accounted for: international and domestic tourism. Although international tourism is wider in scope and area than domestic tourism, the latter, along with the development of international tourism, is a significant factor in the growth of the country's tourism potential and contributes to the growth of tourism revenues. In many countries, domestic tourism is much more important than international tourism. So, for example, in Canada, 77.1% of tourism revenue comes from household spending on domestic tourism, which was \$ 54.6 billion in 2017. In other words, revenues from domestic tourism were three times more than revenues from international tourism (O. Abesadze, 2018)

The National Statistics Office has been conducting permanent research in the field of tourism since 2015. Previously, tourism statistics were mainly based on data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the National Tourism Administration and expert assessments. It is true that the timeline for the results of the Georgian statistical office survey covers

only a few levels, but it is still possible to make some calculations and draw appropriate conclusions. According to the results of the 2019 survey of the National Statistics Office, the number of visits amounted to 643.8 thousand, which is 7.2% more than the same period last year. The highest number of visits was from Azerbaijan (19.8%), Russia (19.0%) and Armenia (17.7%). The lowest number of visits was from Israel, Ukraine and Iran, the share of which was 2.7%, 2, respectively. 7% and 1.8% (see Figure 1)

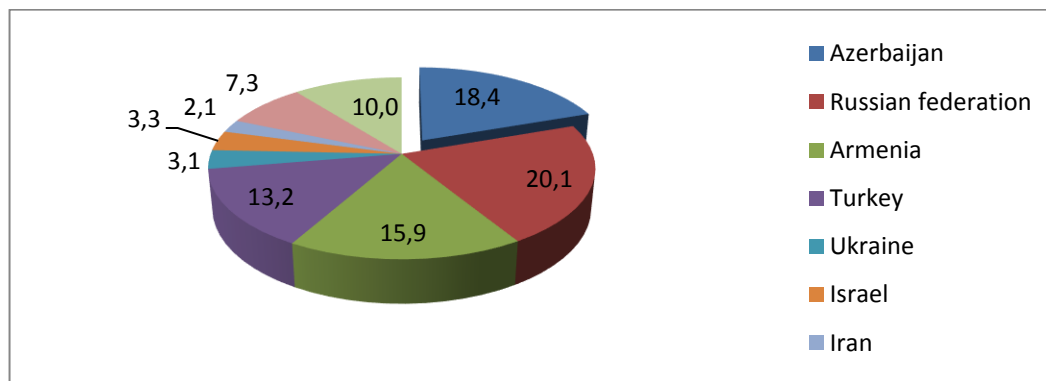
Figure 1: Distribution of the number of visits by countries of citizenship in 2019



Source: National Statistics Office

According to the number of visitors, three countries remain unchanged, but in recent years their place in this ranking has changed, and according to 2019 data, most visitors came to Georgia from Russia. Accordingly, its share in the category of international visitors is the highest and is 20.1%. (See Diagram 2) Azerbaijan and Armenia are traditionally in the top three, with 18.4% and 15.9%, respectively.

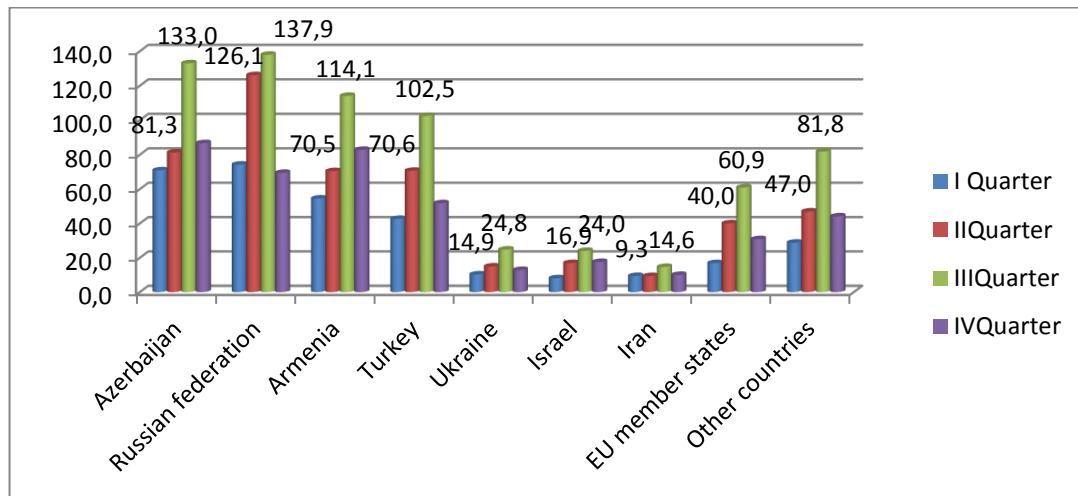
Figure 2: Distribution of visitors according to the geographical structure of the countries



Source: National Statistics Office

According to the analysis of the geographical structure of international tourism, for all countries, including Azerbaijan, as expected, 2019 was the most active third quarter, followed by the fourth quarter. The beginning of the year Georgia is less attractive for international visitors from Azerbaijan.

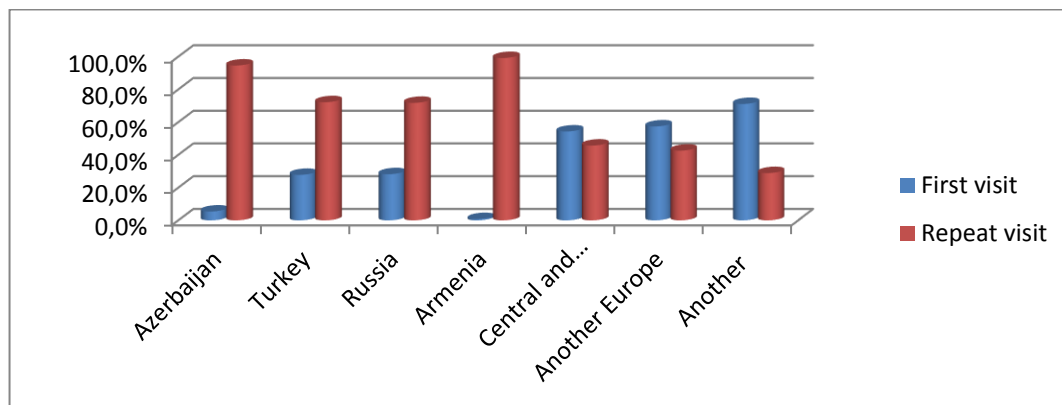
Figure 3: Distribution of the average monthly number of non-resident visitors of Georgia aged 15 and older and their visits by citizenship countries, thousand



Source: National Statistics Office

The highest number of international visitors, 221.8 thousand, belongs to the age group of 31-50 years, which is 46% of the total number of visitors, the group of 15-30 year olds includes 23.8% of visitors, and the smallest number of visitors over 71 years old. As of 2018, it amounted to 8.9 thousand. This represents only 1.9% of the total number of visitors. It can be said that the age structure of the visitors in dynamics has not changed and only minor differences between the indicators are observed according to the years.

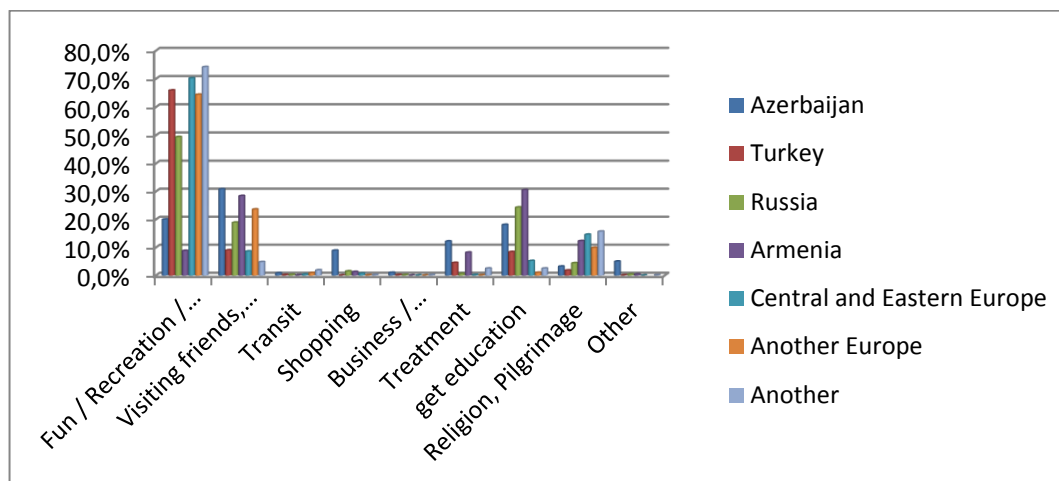
Figure 4: Visits according to the order of arrival in Georgia



Source: National Statistics Office

It seems that 94.6% of tourists from Azerbaijan visited Georgia again and only 5.4% visited the country for the first time, which indicates that Georgia is attractive for the residents of Azerbaijan.

Figure 5: Purpose of the visit according to the residency



Source: National Statistics Office

30.8% of tourists from Azerbaijan came to Georgia to see their relatives, friends and loved ones. 68.2% of tourists from Azerbaijan tasted Georgian cuisine and Georgian wine. 58.8% are arriving in the country for shopping, 28.9% to see cultural and historical sights, etc. Analyzing the dynamics of this data, it was found that this trend has not changed.

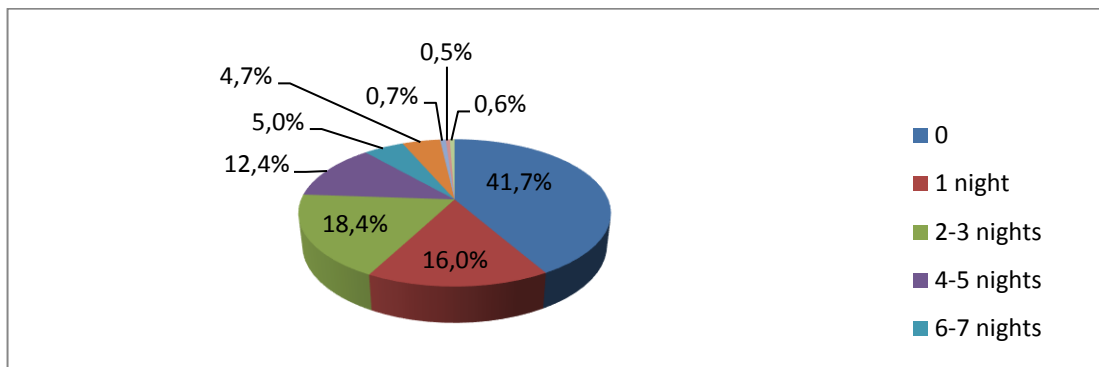
Table 1: Activities carried out according to residency

	Azerbaijan	Turkey	Russia	Armenia	Central and Eastern Europe	Another Europe	Another
Taste local cuisine and wine	68.2%	58.1%	88.1%	70.2%	86.1%	85.2%	77.3%
Shopping	58.8%	42.3%	66.8%	83.2%	55.9%	50.5%	55.8%
Visiting landmarks, cultural and historical heritage sites, museums	28.9%	54.3%	49.8%	4.4%	72.1%	78.8%	81.3%
Visit the amusement park	14.2%	11.3%	15.4%	7.2%	19.7%	20.2%	28.1%
Swimming on the sea, on the lake, on the river, on the beach	12.9%	35.3%	19.2%	9.3%	35.8%	24.2%	17.6%
Visiting nature landscapes, reserves	11.4%	17.5%	15.1%	2.3%	24.4%	30.6%	33.9%
Night club life	4.4%	7.4%	1.7%	3.6%	5.5%	5.6%	7.4%
Gambling	2.4%	23.0%	0.8%	0.1%	1.2%	5.8%	3.5%
Participate in agricultural activities	1.7%	0.1%	0.5%	0.0%	2.5%	1.7%	1.4%

Source: National Statistics Office

Let's see how many nights Azerbaijani tourists spend in the country? To do this, we analyzed the distribution of tourists by the number of nights spent in Georgia. Number of nights spent by Georgian visitors in Azerbaijan.

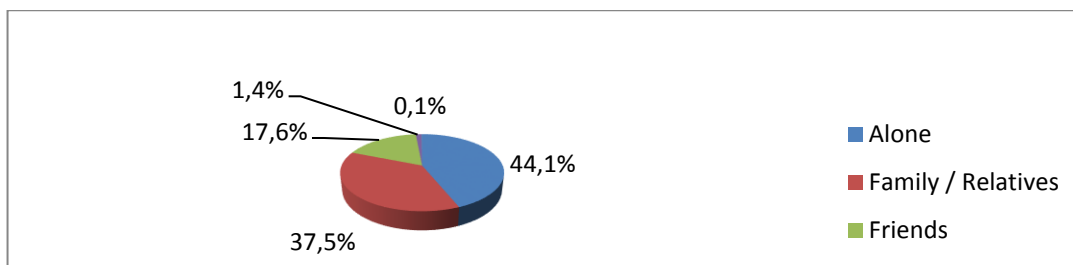
Figure 6. Distribution of tourists according to the number of days spent in Georgia



Source: National Statistics Office

41.7% of tourists from Azerbaijan do not spend the night in the country, 16% in only 1 night and 18.4% in 2-3 nights.

Figure 7: Distribution of tourists according to the number of Accompanying persons

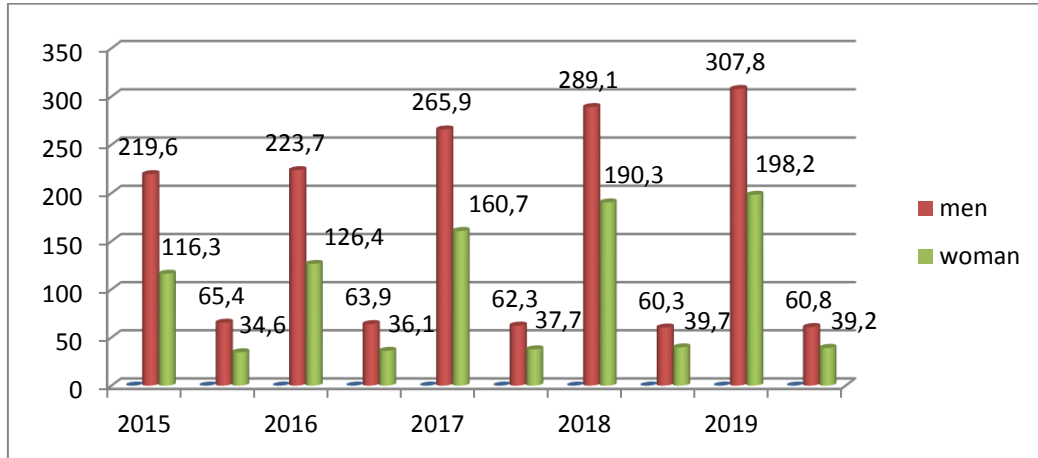


Source: National Statistics Office

As it turned out, 44.1% of tourists come to the country alone, and 37.5% with family members and relatives, 17.6% travel with friends.

The indicators of the sexual structure of the visitors are very interesting. As the data show, men mostly visit Georgia. (Akhvlediani, N., Virsaladze, N., Oniani I. 2018) Among the visitors, been observed in the sexual structure since 2014. According to all-year data, the share of men is in the range of 60% and is characterized by slight changes from 60 to 2-3% per year.

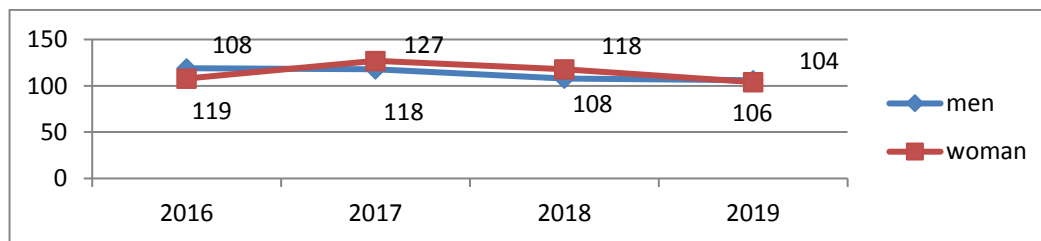
Figure 8: Distribution of visitors by gender (2019)



Source: National Statistics Office

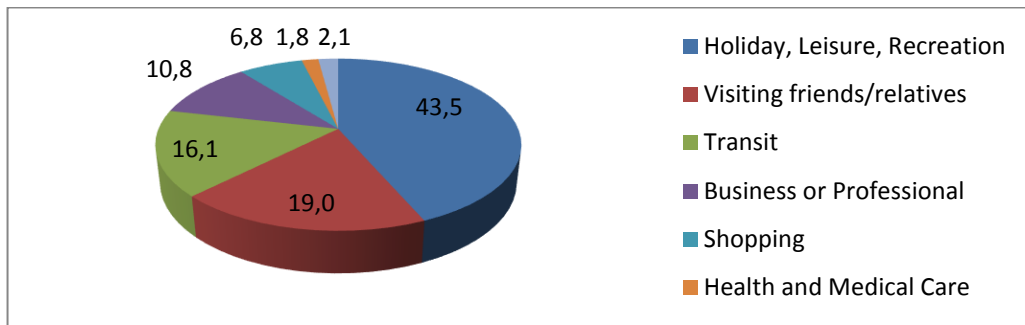
The data show that the growth rates of visitors by both sexes are characterized by the same trend in dynamics. In 2015-2017, the growth rate of female visitors and male visitors increased, by 8% and 27% for men, and 19% and 18% for women, respectively, and from 2018, the rate of increase in visitors for both sexes decreased.

Figure 9: Distribution of visitors by gender



Source: National Statistics Office

The results of the study confirm that the largest number of 280 thousand visits to Georgia (43.5% of the total visits) are for recreation, 124.9 (or 19.0%) visits to friends / relatives, and 11.3 (2.2%) for treatment. And for the purpose of healing. Our country has been used as a transit point for 1.8% of total visits (see Figure 6).

Figure 10: Distribution of monthly average number of visits made by inbound visitors of age 15 and older by main purpose, 2019

Source: National Statistics Office

This trend has been evident in recent years, but it is noteworthy that the number of visitors coming in for recreation and entertainment and their share in the system has been increasing systematically. Apparently, the motivation to visit relatives and loved ones for shopping has decreased. (See Table 1)

Table 2: Distribution of share of visits made by inbound visitors of age 15 and older by main purpose (2015-2019)

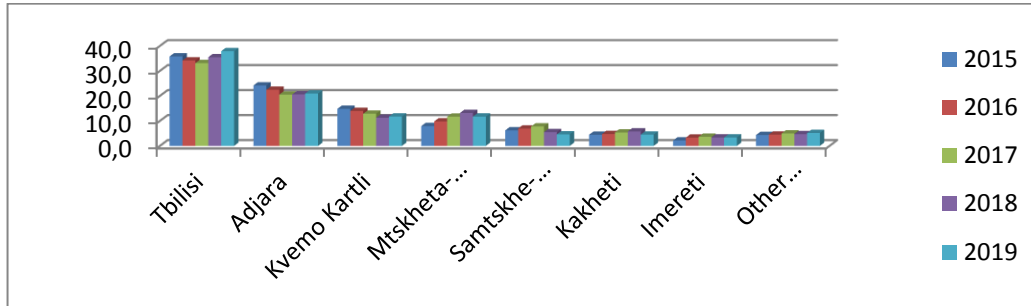
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Holiday, Leisure, Recreation	31.4	33.9	37.7	42.7	43.5
Visiting friends/relatives	23.5	23.2	22.2	20.3	19.0
Transit	18.9	18.2	18.1	16.5	16.1
Business or Professional	10.8	10.1	8.2	8.7	10.8
Shopping	9.5	9.4	9.5	6.9	6.8
Health and Medical Care	4.3	3.8	2.7	2.7	1.8
Other	1.6	1.3	1.4	2.2	2.1

Source: National Statistics Office

I wonder what the attractiveness of the regions is?

Tbilisi, Adjara, Kvemo Kartli and Mtskheta-Mtianeti are the most attractive for Azerbaijani tourists, as well as for other international visitors to Georgia in general.

Figure 11: Distribution of visitors by visiting regions

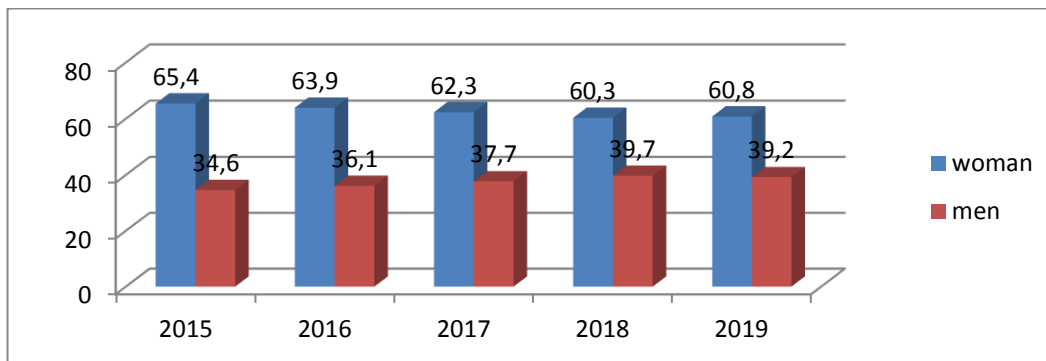


Source: National Statistics Office

According to 2019 data, 37.9% of visitors visited Tbilisi, 21% Adjara, 13.2% Mtskheta-Mtianeti, 11.7% Kvemo Kartli, 11.8% Kakheti, 4.5%, etc.

As studies represent, women are traditionally more interested in visiting Georgia than men. The share of women in visitors starting in 2015 ranges from 60.8% to 65.4%. If we extend this trend to the geographical structure of visitors, then it will turn out that Georgia is more attractive for Azerbaijani women as well.

Figure 12: Distribution of international visitors by gender



Source: National Statistics Office

It is interesting to determine in details the attractiveness and to determine the rated classification of places to visit according to the individual districts. For the analysis, we conducted the results of the 2016-2017 survey “Statistical Survey of Foreign Tourist Expenses of Foreign Visitors” conducted by and the Department of Economic and Social Statistics the National Statistics Office. In this study, an interesting picture was revealed as a result of the analysis of the visit to the tourist places, taking into account the population of the tourists. For example, it turned out that 58,66% of Azerbaijani visitors to the study were in Tbilisi. Most of the visitors to Bakuriani - 31% - were from Russia, 27% - visitors from Azerbaijan; 30% of visitors to Batumi were Azerbaijanis, 29.7% were Ukrainians, 16.8% were Russians and 9.9% were Israelis; 27.7% of visitors

to Borjomi were citizens of Central Asia (Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan), and 23.6% were citizens of Azerbaijan; 64% of visitors to Bolnisi and Marneuli turned out to be residents of Azerbaijan; 38% of Azerbaijani visitors were in Gudauri; 12% of the respondents were in Kobuleti, 42.8% in Armenia and 30.4% in Russia; Of the surveyed visitors, 35.2% were from Ukraine, 27.3% from Russia, 20% from Azerbaijan and others. (Abesadze N., Mindorashvili M., Paresashvili N., 2018. 45-47).

It should be noted that in parallel with the growth of Georgia's attractiveness, there are problems with improving infrastructure. Undoubtedly, the number of hotels in Georgia has increased, but as studies show, visitors point out that there is still a problem with the inappropriate level and quantity of accommodation, which they believe does not meet the relevant standards. Unsurprisingly, one of the problems is the improper equipment and quality of food facilities, especially in popular tourist areas and near pedestrian paths, less or not fully sanitary facilities, etc. (O. Abesadze 2018. 23-27).

CONCLUSION

There is a growing trend of tourist flows from Azerbaijan; The main places to visit are Tbilisi, Batumi, Signaghi, Borjomi and Bakuriani; Most visitors come to Georgia for leisure; 68.2% of tourists from Azerbaijan tasted Georgian cuisine and Georgian wine. 58.8% are arriving in Georgia for shopping, 28.9% to see cultural and historical sights, etc. 94.6% of tourists from Azerbaijan visited Georgia again and only 5.4% visited the country for the first time, which indicates that Georgia is attractive for the residents of Azerbaijan. 41.7% of tourists from Azerbaijan do not spend the night in the country, 16% only 1 night and 18.4% 2-3 nights. 44.1% of tourists come to the country alone, and 37.5% with family members and relatives, 17.6% travel with friends. The need for diversity and infrastructural improvement of the tourism product is still relevant, etc. Despite the above-mentioned defects, international and domestic tourism is developing in Kakheti region and its importance for the revival and development of the current Georgian economy is gradually increasing, as it is distinguished by its unique tourist potential and diversity in the world as Georgia is considered among 200 global eco-regions identified by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). (Paresashvili, N., 2014)

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