

ADVENTURE TOURISM MARKETING: A RESEARCH ON THE TOURISTS' BEHAVIOURS REGARDING TO ADVENTURE TOURISM IN AZERBAIJAN

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—Abstract —

Marketers in tourism industry have to be careful in modern competitive market while satisfying needs and want of the clients having great expectations, higher education, requiring high quality service. Hence, the companies offering different and alternative tourism services will develop the country's tourism industry. Azerbaijan has very good opportunities for tourism services, activates and adventures as the country owns well-constructed tourism infrastructure, beautiful natural environment and hospitality values. Azerbaijan will get benefit by using these opportunities. Types of tourism will be differentiated, service supply will be developed, and alternative tourism fields will be enhanced for economic and social development of different regions of Azerbaijan.

Adventure tourism is a niche market. Azerbaijan's natural environment, cultural diversification allow country to develop tourism's potential capacity. The rise in

interest towards activity- based tourism has allowed many players to enter what is now a highly specialized and profitable market characterized by enormous variety of products such as hunting, bird watching trips, cycling trips, canoeing, hitchhiking, trekking etc.

This study inquired the definitions and marketing requirements of adventure tourism and also examined how it is perceived by the tourists taking part in. Besides, this study investigated the effect of demographic, socioeconomic and trip related characteristics of tourists on the adventure trip types. For this purpose, the data used in this study was collected from incoming tourists to Azerbaijan. The results of this study highlight various implications for the future researches in adventure tourism marketing.

Key Words: *Adventure tourism, adventure activities, adventure tourism market segmentation criteries, adventure tourist, tourist product and services*

JEL Classification: M310, L830

1. INTRODUCTION

Adventure tourism is a quickly growing field in the industry, but is not commonly applying special marketing methods by the management. The prominent growth of travel industry has mounted into new directions within the tourist market. The whole concept of traveling has changed and consequently the applications of marketing need revision and adaptation. Adventure traveling is one of the young and growing sectors in tourism industry. The growing number of adventure travel providers has increased competition; however, the applied marketing methods are merely following the principles of regular travel marketing. Ultimately, the possibilities are so abundant, that the adventure travel market itself is developing even newer dimensions. Experimenting by an escapade is no longer a matter of back bagger spirited travelers, but varieties of new segments are consuming adventure journeys. This transformation entitles for a systematic analysis on effective marketing strategies, adapted from traditional service marketing concepts.

This article will analyze tourist's behaviours regarding to adventure tourism in Azerbaijan.

However, this research will carry on with very applicable methods to any kind of travel business. The empirical part follows the theory, and will describe real case scenarios in adventure tourists. The participants in data gathering are adventure tourists from different countries visited Azerbaijan. The research method is following qualitative norms, and the results and conclusions will be based on the answers from questionnaires.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Understanding of Adventure Tourism

Individualism is a growing phenomenon in some levels of tourism, and the concept of mass tourism is gingerly fading away. When an individual is seeking experimental traveling, the significance of commodities and pampering services decreases, and the physical and mental practices become desired objectives.

According to Asunta Brännare-Sorsa (et all, 2003), if usual travel services and activities are not attractive anymore, a person may drift away to search for activities that can be experienced with all senses, and provide moments that are more memorable. Adventure traveling proposes experiments that include activities associated with several levels of excitement and survival. Although the word adventure describes the travel experience misleadingly, the purpose of the practice is to build a sensation of risk in relatively extreme places. Verhelä & Lackman (2003) mention that the voluntary nature of this type of traveling makes the traveler to challenge his/her own physical and emotional limits, by being the active participant in an extreme environment. The changes from original self-organized adventure traveling to an expanding retail market have enforced adventure travels to become a major sector in tourist industry. For the rapid commercial growth of this sector, the necessary attention for marketing, development, and management of adventure tourism has been quite little. Through the development of adventure travel, the demand has been modified by offering adventure packages of different levels, and evidently, the industry will evolve to even more touristy edge in the future (Buckley 2006, 5-7.).

2.2 Nature of Adventure Tourism

War and hunger are no longer as inevitable parts of peoples' life as in the past. Changes in life-styles and values cause ever more adventure seekers traveling around, providing new business opportunities in several ways. Firstly, the principles of an adventurous experience are based on a rush of adrenaline, excitement and the natural environment. This reduces the necessity of high-cost hotel and resort structure of usual holiday packages, and opens more possibilities for start-up and small businesses. Secondly, the geographic concentration in adventure traveling is focused on less developed countries like Chile, Peru, and Argentina in Americas, which can offer tremendous resources for extreme traveling. This direction of adventure tourism offers many opportunities for marketing different and new destinations (Ahtola 2002, 7).

2.3 Challenges in Adventure Tourism

New methods of creating successful adventure packages are numerous and competitive in the globalizing market, but certain concerns build barriers for the innovation. For example, the line between fear and horror is fine, and the extreme travel experience is not enjoyable if the consumers' are put over their limit. On the contrary, a right balance of safe fear and daring may create a tremendous feeling of satisfaction for the traveler. Defining these limits and capabilities in the consumer segments can be difficult, and in addition raises matters of safety to a significant level. Different types of adventure travels are divided into traditional, challenging, and refreshing adventure traveling, and within these the programs may include survival games, physical activities (climbing, rafting, skydiving etc.) or even role games. In basic terms, the components of an adventurous trip include environment, activities, completing tasks, motivation, feeling of risk, and experience. In the basis of this, the evolving adventure tourism offers many dimensions for effective marketing (Verhelä & Lackman 2003, 179-180.)

Research states that the potential global adventure travelers are about 60 million. Recently the share of adventure travelers from all tourists in the world has been about one percent (five million), and the number is growing by 20 % every year (Latikka 2002). The growth rate of eco and adventure tourism has been over twice as rapid as the growth of regular tourism. It is evident that the development of environmental concerns has driven companies and regions to offer alternatives for regular tourism. This emphasis has also driven personal motivations of consumers to favor physical and healthier activities during vacations (Reims 2002, 7). Due to the youth of adventure travel in tourism, the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) has opened discussion on more detailed definition of this segment, which is often associated with ecotourism and similar activities. In a joint research with Michigan State University ATTA seeks to give more perspective and recognition for the industry considering different areas of interest (Koumelis, T. 2005.).

2.4 Adventure-Tourism in Azerbaijan

The concept of adventure travel was not familiar in Azerbaijan until 2012-2013s, but an increasing number of tourists are showing interest in nature related, or incentive traveling within different zones of the country. The most adventure activities are associated with snow, and although there are no extreme landscapes in Azerbaijan, there are an increasing number of adventure tourists entering the country. Winter is the season that attracts the majority of adventure tourists to Azerbaijan, because of the exotic snow image of north part of Azerbaijan and Great Caucasus Mountains. This can also be remarked in the travel-marketing sector. Many travel providers now offer adventurous experiences, in addition to the original winter activities, and ultimately this shift has moved the market to an increasing competition. (Santasalo, 2006.)

Taking advantage of the long summer nights, the possibilities of spending time with adventurous activities are plenty. Although the conditions in canoeing, sailing, or hiking are not very intense, they fit well for experimenting in the nature. Inlands of Azerbaijan also offer forests for camping and routes for cycling, horseback riding and hunting. Evidently, fresh air and clean nature has a high value in Azerbaijan adventure-tourism, as well as the peaceful scenery for most travelers. During the winter, the activity element is snow. Ski resorts are situated in the north part of the country, Big Caucasus Mountains being the most attractive zone for adventurers. Azerbaijani adventure travelers count to only hundreds, but the number is increasing and predicted to be thousands within the next few years.

3 METHODOLOGY

This part explains the methodology used during the data gathering process.

3.1 Quantitative Research

There are two significant methodological approaches that are broadly used; quantitative and qualitative research. Saunders (et.al, 2000) says that, choosing approach depends on the on what kind of information that is studied. This

research is a quantitative research, as the data gathering was done with a small sample size. The collected information is numeric, and the study is based on statistics.

3.2 Data Gathering

Quantitative data was gathered through the survey method. One of the survey methods – “drop and collect survey” was also used. During the implementation process, 350 surveys were distributed, and collected survey was only 263. 63 surveys missed some values and hence only 200 surveys were taken into consideration during the analysis.

4 EMPIRICAL DATA

As mentioned in previous section, only 200 surveys were analyzed. Frequency of the participants is given below:

Nationality	Frequency	Percentage %
Turkey	11	5.5%
UAE	68	34%
Iran	38	19%
Georgia	16	8.0%
Russia	33	16.5%
UK	11	5.5%
Iraq	23	11.5%
TOTAL	200	100.0

Table 4.1. Frequency by nationalities

According to the table, most of the visitors were from United Arab Emirates, Iran, Russia and Iraq with 34%, 19%, 16.5% and 11.5% respectively. Less tourists were from Georgia, Turkey and the UK with 8%, 5.5% and 5.5% respectively.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	128	64%
Female	72	36%
TOTAL	200	100.0

Table 4.2. Frequency by genders

128 respondents participated during the survey were male and it is 64% of total tourists participated in the questionnaire. Only 36% of tourists are female. It shows that Male visitors are double times more than female tourists.

Age	Frequency	Percentage %
0-30	88	44%
31-40	52	26%
41-50	42	21%
51 +	18	9%
TOTAL	200	100.0

Table 4.3. Frequency by Age groups

44% of tourists were maximum 30 years old and it shows that Azerbaijan is mostly interested by young adults, while 26% and 21% of the visitors were aged between 31-40 and 41-50 age groups respectively.

Monthly Income	Frequency	Percentage %
Maximum 2000 €	25	12.5%
2000 – 3999 €	33	16.5%
4000 – 5999 €	27	13.5%
6000 – 7999 €	34	17.0%
8000 €+	81	40.5%
TOTAL	200	100.0

Table 4.4. Frequency by Monthly Income

40.5% of tourists visited Azerbaijan are owned 8000 € or more monthly income. It is in line with the expectations as most of the visitors are from UAE. Only 12.5% of the tourists' monthly income is less than 2000 €

	Frequency	Percentage %
Never	58	29.0%
Once a year	115	57.5%
Twice a year	27	13.5%
TOTAL	200	100.0

Table 4.5. Frequency by “How often do you take adventure travels?”

Above mentioned table shows that 57.5% of tourists like to take adventure activities once a year while only 13.5% of visitors said that they enjoy adventure activities twice a year. Only 29% of total participants said that it is their first time to take adventure travel.

	Frequency	Percentage %
Never reluctant	18	9%
Little reluctant	56	28%
Highly reluctant	103	51.5%
Very reluctant	23	11.5%
TOTAL	200	100.0

Table 4.6. Frequency by “How reluctant are you to go an Adventure travel?”

Table 4.6 proved that 51.5% of travelers are highly reluctant for adventure travel and only 9% of visitors never reluctant for adventure activities. 56 participants or 28% of total tourists are little reluctant on adventure travels.

	Prefer		Not Prefer		TOTAL	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Spring	86	43%	114	57%	200	100
Summer	119	59.5%	81	40.5%	200	100
Autumn	72	36%	128	64%	200	100
Winter	122	61%	78	39%	200	100

Table 4.7. Frequency by “In which season of the year do you have Adventure Tourism Activities mostly?”

According to the tourists participated in the survey, winter and summer are most preferred seasons for the tourists for adventure activities with 61% and 59.5% respectively. Less preferred seasons are autumn with 36%. It is normal, because most of the people get a vocation in summer and winter seasons.

	Frequency	Percentage %
Doing all preparations by myself	48	24%
Buying all inclusive package tour	118	59%
Taking in part, advantage of the travel agency for some preparations	34	17%
TOTAL	200	100.0

Table 4.8. Frequency by “How do you organize the preparations of Adventure Travel?”

Above mentioned table illustrates that 59% of the tourists buy all inclusive packet tour for their adventure activities, on the other hand, only 17% of the visitors partially benefit from the advantages of tourism agencies. Furthermore, 24% of participants mentioned that they do all preparations by themselves.

	Prefer		Not Prefer		TOTAL	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Alone	15	7.5%	185	92.5%	200	100
Family Members	106	53%	94	47%	200	100
Friends	156	78%	44	22%	200	100

Table 4.9. Frequency by “With whom do you prefer to go adventure travel?”

78% of tourists mentioned that they feel relaxed if they travel with their friends, and only 53% of the visitors stated that it is better to get adventure activities with family members. In contrast, 92.5% of participants do not enjoy adventure travel if they travel alone.

	Info Resource		Not Info Resource		TOTAL	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Travel agency	85	42.5%	115	57.5%	200	100
Mouth to Mouth	106	53%	94	47%	200	100
Sources related to region	23	11.5%	177	88.5%	200	100
Brochure, books, magazines etc.	56	28%	144	72%	200	100
Internet	69	34.5%	131	65.5%	200	100
TV, radio etc.	34	17%	164	83%	200	100
Other	1	0.5%	199	99.5%	200	100

Table 4.10. Frequency by “How important are each of the following in your decision to take an adventure travel?”

Most used Information resources of travelers are travel agencies, mouth to mouth recommendation, and internet with 42.5%, 53% and 34.5% respectively. According to the tourists, they are less informed by print media, sources related by region, and broadcast media. They consider that the most useful channel is personal recommendation with 53% and less useful channel is print media.

	Average	Standard Deviation
Soft Nature – Nature Tours (Camping, bird watching tours, etc.)	3,250	1,190
Risk Equipped-hazardous (Paragliding, Sailing, etc.)	2,100	1,320
Hard Challenge-High Struggle (Mountaineering, Sea canoeing, etc.)	2,590	1,380
Rugged Nature- (rafting, trekking, Safari, virgin forest, such as discovery)	2,230	1,315
Winter Snow-Winter Sports (Snow hiking, skiing, etc.)	3,240	1,195

Table 4.11. “Indicate your interest level to the following Adventure Travel types.”

Most preferred adventure activities are soft nature-nature tours (camping, hunting) and winter snow-winter sports (snow hiking and skiing) with the rate of 3.25 and 3.24 respectively. Risk Equipped-hazardous (2,1), hard challenges (2,59), and rugged nature (2,23) activities are also preferred by the tourists.

	Average	Standard Deviation
Excitement and Entertainment	3.850	0.9211
Personal Growth	3.458	1.1150
Environment and Cultural Interaction	3.701	1.0815
Desire the Achievement	3.455	1.1725
Challenging Risk	2.970	1.2897
Winning New Skills	3.400	1.2230
Creating a Difference	3.525	1.1646
Non-routine Living Forms	3.443	1.2851

Table 4.12. “Motives which steer people to take an Adventure Travel.”

Table 4.12 describes that all motives are in average importance for the travelers while taking an adventure travel. Most important motive is excitement and entertainment with 3.850 and followed by environment and cultural interaction with 3.701. Challenging risk was considered as the least important motive for adventure tourism with 2.970.

	Frequency	Percentage %
Very bad	14	7.0%
Bad	21	10.5%
Average	56	28%
Good	85	42.5%
Very good	24	12%
TOTAL	200	100.0

Table 4.13. Frequency by “What do you think about the image of Azerbaijan in tourism industry?”

According to the answers given by the tourists visited Azerbaijan, the image of Azerbaijan in tourism industry is above average. 42.5% of the total participants evaluated the image of the country in good condition, in contrast 7% and 10.5% of respondents were not satisfied by the country’s image and rated it with very bad and bad respectively. It shows that Azerbaijan still needs to improve its image in

tourism industry and image making marketing activities have be implemented for creating image.

	Frequency	Percentage %
Very bad	7	3.5%
Bad	12	6.0%
Average	95	47.5%
Good	55	27.5%
Very good	31	15.5%
TOTAL	200	100.0

Table 4.13. Frequency by “Evaluate the service quality provided in Azerbaijan.”

As mentioned in the table, 47.5% of the tourists are satisfied by the tourism services of Azerbaijan, and even 27.5% and 15.5% of total adventure tourists rated the service good and even better respectively. Only 3.5% and 6% tourists were not satisfied by the service quality of Azerbaijan’s tourism.

5 CONCLUSION

As a result of research and statistical analysis, below mentioned facts were generated:

- Azerbaijan's adventure tourism is mostly preferred by Arab tourists, especially from UAE and Iraq.
- Two third of total tourists are male and it is considered that it is normal, because adventure tourism requires more passion and physical power.
- Azerbaijan is manly preferred by young adventure lovers. 0-30 aged adult group is leading.
- Adventure tourism of Azerbaijan mostly serves the tourists having monthly salary of 8000€and it is 40.5% of total tourists visited.
- More than half tourists concluded that they prefer adventure tourism once a year.
- Half of the tourists visited Azerbaijan for adventure activities are highly reluctant.
- Winter and summer are most preferred winters for adventure tourism in Azerbaijan.
- Adventure tourists (59%) mentioned that they prefer buying all inclusive package tours and it is better than doing all things individually as it consumes more time.
- 79% of total tourists prefer benefiting adventure activities with their friends instead of being alone. Half of them also prefer to relax with the family as well.
- Tourists further concluded that they got informed about Azerbaijan's adventure tourism by personal recommendations, internet travel agencies.
- Most preferred adventure activities are soft nature-nature tours such as camping and hunting, winter snow-winter sports such as hiking and skiing.
- Most important motive is excitement and entrainment for the tourists.
- The image of Azerbaijan's adventure tourism is average and it still needs to be more developed.

- Service quality of Azerbaijan's tourism is average as well. Half of the tourists were satisfied by the service quality.

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