



American Journal of Tourism and Hospitality (AJTH)

ISSN: 2993-6519 (ONLINE)

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 1 (2025)

PUBLISHED BY
E-PALLI PUBLISHERS, DELAWARE, USA

Behind the Snow Experiences: Winter Stories of Tourists' Travel Motivation, Appreciation, and Challenges in Georgia and Armenia

Ismael A. Haguisan III^{1*}, Carmen C. Menes¹

Article Information

Received: March 15, 2025

Accepted: April 24, 2025

Published: May 16, 2025

Keywords

Narrative Inquiry, Tourists' Appreciation, Tourists' Challenges, Travel Motivation, Winter Stories, Winter Tourism

ABSTRACT

The snow, tourist destinations, activities, food and drinks, and hospitality contributed to the satisfying and unforgettable experiences of the tourists visiting the beautiful countries of Georgia and Armenia. The study narrated the winter experiences of tourists in Georgia and Armenia. Narrative inquiry is the approach used in the qualitative research design. The researchers implemented an overarching interview question to collect qualitative data. The participants of this study were two Filipino tourists working in a private school in Doha, State of Qatar. Credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability were the rigors of the findings to establish the trustworthiness of the data. After a thorough data analysis using the spreadsheet as a dendrogram, seven themes emerged: Travel Motivation; Appreciating and Describing Various Tourist Destinations; Activities in the Destinations; Food and Drinks in Georgia; Hospitality; Challenges Experienced by the Tourists and Recommendations. Findings reveal that the tourists were motivated to experience the snow and relax while experiencing leisure. They appreciated and described the various tourist destinations where they spent their activities. Moreover, Georgia's tourists who consumed food and drinks received recognition and appreciation. Tourists also learn about the hospitality of the kind people in Armenia. However, the tourists encountered minor challenges such as long layovers, accommodation transfers, and occasional communication differences. Nevertheless, they highly recommend visiting Georgia and Armenia as exceptional winter destinations.

INTRODUCTION

Georgia is emerging as an attractive location for tourism, with its potential gradually being realized. The steady increase in tourist visits has contributed to economic development, benefiting both the tourism industry and its supporting sectors (Arghutashvili, 2018). With a wealth of assets—ranging from its distinctive natural landscapes and rich biodiversity to its historical landmarks, cultural heritage, and ethnographic variety—Georgia is well-positioned to advance sustainable tourism initiatives (Gogitidze *et al.*, 2023). Like many nations, tourism plays a vital role in Georgia's economy and job creation (Sekhniashvili, 2020).

On the other hand, Armenia has a well-established infrastructure for business tourism: high-quality hotels of international brands with congressional platforms, several expo centers, and a well-developed and modern transport system. Yerevan and the resorts of Armenia offer high levels of food and beverage facilities and additional services for business tourism, such as the organization of excursions, cultural programs, and entertainment (Atoyan, 2016).

The tourists' primary reasons for traveling are to experience Georgian and Armenian culture, the snow and winter weather, and the local people. In addition, the participants' goal in traveling was to decompress and escape their everyday work routines. Tourism connects various dimensions of society, playing a vital role in promoting the preservation and appreciation of both natural and cultural heritage (Campo & De Guzman, 2024).

Vacations, new experiences, learning about and experiencing nature, history, cultural heritage, customs, and the cultures of various people in foreign places are all associated with tourism (Arghutashvili, 2018). Wu (2015) claims that travel motivation refers to personal goals that compel someone to take a vacation for pleasure, such as stress relief, enjoying the outdoors, seeing stunning scenery, and learning (Pereira *et al.*, 2022).

Ski tourism, hot spring, and golf tourism are the primary products of snow and ice tourism and are one of the three main themed holiday leisure tourism activities worldwide (He & Luo, 2020). There is something special about ice-snow tourism—it changes the scenery according to the seasons, elevates emotions, makes it easier to be alone (Bielinis *et al.*, 2021), improves physical health (Burtscher *et al.*, 2019), and so on. It is created in places with ice and snow (Sun *et al.*, 2023).

Tourists from tropical Asian nations working in the Middle East often look for novel and invigorating experiences, such as seeing snow for the first time and taking a break from their routine jobs. Winter is the most favored season for those drawn to snow and ice tourism, which typically kicks off earlier than other seasonal travel activities. In the northern hemisphere, the prime time for snow-related tourism generally runs from November through January (Liu *et al.*, 2018). According to Jin *et al.* (2020), destinations use their cold weather and snowy landscapes to host winter-themed cultural events, making ice and snow tourism especially appealing to visitors during this season.

¹ Graduate School, La Consolacion College Bacolod, Bacolod City, Philippines

* Corresponding author's e-mail: ihaguisan3@gmail.com

The different tourist spots in Georgia and Armenia are the primary reasons for coming there. Emphasizing the travelers' repeated remarks, they recognized and characterized the important locations that left an impression on their minds, hearts, and entire beings. Products for nature-based tourism provide tourists with priceless experiences that can only be thoroughly enjoyed or stimulated by employing the senses. The senses of taste, smell, touch, sound, and mobility can all be used to improve a visitor's experience at any given location (Zainol, 2014).

More than any other industry, tourism is reliant on its surroundings because it is the primary resource and factor that draws tourists. As such, it can either support or impede the growth of the various tourism activities and their constituent parts (Ciangă & Sorocovschi, 2017). In a particular location backed by the administration of attractions, lodging, and other facilities, tourism operations aim to combine artificial tourism, cultural tourism, and natural tourism (Fakari *et al.*, 2023).

From the statements made by the tourists, it can be inferred that in addition to participating in winter and snow tourism, visitors can also partake in various activities that have nothing to do with snow sports tourism. These pursuits could involve dining, taking pictures, touring, and enjoying the outdoors.

Travelers' happiness at a location is greatly influenced by food (Yousaf *et al.*, 2018). There is a growing correlation between local cuisine and tourism, as seen by the rise in travelers seeking distinctive culinary experiences (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010; Long *et al.*, 2023). Two subthemes arose from this theme: Georgian Wine and Food. Visitors cited Khinkali and the famed pig dish as two of Georgia's most well-known cuisines. In Georgia, wine varieties were the most well-known welcome drink.

Smiles and eye contact are standard greetings between hotel customers and staff during hospitality meetings. However, prior research in the hospitality field, including that conducted in psychology, medicine, athletics, and law, has not examined the relative effectiveness of eye contact and smiles as experience triggers in guest-employee hospitality encounters (Islam, 2023). Nowadays, hospitality employees need to be adept at grinning and maintaining eye contact with clients (Ferm & Thaichon, 2021; Fulmer *et al.*, 2009). It is crucial to smile and show kindness to travelers. The friendly hospitality of the people made visitors feel at home during their stay in Armenia.

Travelers may run into issues with various things, like unforeseen costs, pollution, safety, security, etc (Chockalingam & Ganesh, 2010). Three sub-themes arose from the difficulties faced by the tourists in this study: the lengthy layover, the lodging, and the language barrier.

Because tourism cannot be physically displayed or inspected in advance, unlike material consumption (Kirilenko *et al.*, 2021), travelers are highly motivated to seek out advice and insights from other people's shared experiences to reduce risk and uncertainty (Cheng *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, travelers are highly willing to share

their travel experiences (Wong *et al.*, 2020) because tourism allows them to escape the confines of daily life (Sarial-Abi *et al.*, 2020) and experience a very different life from their routines (Filep & Laing, 2019; Xu & Zhang, 2021). Travel experience sharing has significantly impacted the tourism business and played a crucial role in tourist travel (F. Chen *et al.*, 2020; Su *et al.*, 2021). Usually, snow is the reason for the tourists. They suggested visiting Georgia and Armenia since the travel is inexpensive, worthwhile, and instructive. From the tourist's perspective, it also boosts the likelihood of returning to the destination (Olivar *et al.*, 2024). The researchers are profoundly interested in the experiences of tourists who traveled to Georgia and Armenia. Therefore, the researchers are interested in exploring and describing the stories of the tourists in terms of food and beverage, tourist destination, hospitality, and culture.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Design

Narrative inquiry was used as the research design to explore the lived experiences of participants through storytelling, enabling a deep understanding of personal and social meanings (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009; Esin *et al.*, 2014; Mertova & Webster, 2007). This method allows for the interpretation of stories as expressions of identity and cultural significance, making it especially relevant in tourism and educational contexts (Carson *et al.*, 2017; Indira, 2020).

Sources of Data

The study purposively selected two Filipino male participants aged 32–50, currently teaching Senior High School in Doha, Qatar. Both had 7–15 years of teaching experience in the Middle East, doctorate degrees, and extensive travel backgrounds. These criteria ensured that the participants could provide rich, relevant narratives aligned with the study's objectives.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers distributed informed consent forms and conducted unstructured interviews using a Filipino communicative approach to foster rapport and natural conversation. Participants agreed to audio recordings and responded to overarching questions designed to elicit meaningful insights.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed of the study's goals, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any point. Anonymity was maintained using aliases, and all data were handled with strict confidentiality. Consent covered all aspects of participation, including audio recording and use of data in reporting.

Rigors of the Findings

Qualitative research delves deeply into the complexities of human actions, beliefs, and lived experiences,

highlighting the importance of context and subtle distinctions. To ensure the validity and reliability of its results, establishing trustworthiness is essential. This involves key components such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ahmed, 2024). Credibility was achieved through triangulation of sources and member checking (Elo *et al.*, 2014; Jentoft & Olsen, 2019; Morse, 2015). Transferability was supported through thick descriptions of the research context and participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Younas *et al.*, 2023). Dependability was established using the code-recode method, ensuring consistency in theme identification (Anney, 2015; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Confirmability was addressed by maintaining an audit trail and applying the check-recheck method to verify data interpretations (Bowen, 2009; Connelly, 2016; Lewis, 2009).

Data Explication

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic process. First, researchers familiarized themselves with the data through transcription and repeated readings. Next, relevant excerpts were coded and analyzed using a spreadsheet as a dendrogram. These codes were sorted and combined into initial themes, which were then reviewed and refined for consistency and alignment with the research objectives (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). Themes were named and defined according to their core meanings, and finally, the findings were organized into a coherent report aligned with the literature and supported by participants' narratives. Participant anonymity was preserved using aliases throughout the analysis and reporting process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After a thorough qualitative data analysis, seven themes emerged: Travel Motivation, appreciating and Describing Various Tourist Destinations, activities in the Destinations, food and Drinks in Georgia, hospitality in Armenia, Challenges Experienced by the Tourists, and Recommendations.

Profile of the Participants

Noah -He graduated with a Bachelor of Secondary Education, majoring in English and Literature with a minor in Social Studies. He also finished a Master's degree in Educational Management and a Doctor of Philosophy, majoring in Public Governance. Noah spent 10 years teaching in a private school in Doha, Qatar. In terms of traveling abroad, he could travel to Asia and the Middle East, namely, Hong Kong, Abu Dhabi, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain.

Arthur- He graduated with a Bachelor of Secondary Education and a Master of Management, majoring in Administration and Supervision. He is also a Doctor of Education, majoring in Industrial Management. Arthur taught in a private school in Doha, State of Qatar, for 20 years. He has traveled to several Asian countries: Hong

Kong, China, Nepal, Thailand, and South Korea.

Theme 1: Travel Motivation

Most of the travel motivation of the participants is to experience the snow and the winter season, as well as the culture and the people in Georgia and Armenia. Also, the participants' travel purpose was to relax and unwind from their daily work routine. Tourism relates to vacations, new impressions, and discovering and exploring nature, history, cultural heritage, customs, and the culture of different people in unknown places (Arghutashvili, 2018). According to Wu, (2015) Travel motivation is a desire to relieve pressure, enjoy a natural environment, experience beautiful scenery, and learn, which forces an individual to take a vacation for pleasure (Pereira *et al.*, 2022).

Skiing, hot springs, and golf tourism are three of the most prominent themed leisure vacation activities globally, particularly in snow and ice tourism (He & Luo, 2020). Ice and snow tourism offers a distinctive appeal—it transforms natural landscapes with the seasons, fosters a sense of calm (Bielinis *et al.*, 2021), encourages moments of solitude (Gatti *et al.*, 2022), and supports physical well-being (Burtscher *et al.*, 2019). Such tourism typically flourishes in regions known for their snowy and icy environments (Sun *et al.*, 2023).

These are their statements:

Noah:

"I intend to experience the snow and the winter season in Gudauri, Georgia."

"Aside from learning the culture, in my 38 years of existence, I decided to experience the snow in the country, which I have never been with a good winter season."

"I longed to experience touching and swimming in the snow, which happened in reality."

"I want to learn the culture and its people."

Arthur:

"My travel motivation in going to Georgia and Armenia is to experience snow and its cold weather."

"I travel to relax and unwind from a bulk of work in school, and I believe I deserve to relax just for a few weeks."

"I want to see the place and mingle with the people there."

As tourists living in tropical Asian countries and working in the Middle East, based on their statements implied that they are longing for unusual events and activities like experiencing the snow and escaping from their daily work routine. Most tourists will choose ice and snow tourism in winter; winter is the best season for ice and snow tourism. For example, the most suitable time for ice and snow tourism in the northern hemisphere is from November to January next year (Liu *et al.*, 2018). Ice-snow tourism involves utilizing a region's cold-climate natural resources, specifically ice and snow, to draw visitors to winter-themed cultural and seasonal events (Jin *et al.*, 2020).

Regarding travel motivations, several studies emphasized the importance of relaxation and seeking (Boksberger & Laesser, 2009; Guinn, 1980; Sangpikul, 2008; Vigolo, 2017; Ward, 2014). In addition, social purposes such as

spending time with the family or meeting people and socializing often represent a travel motivation for older tourists (Horneman *et al.*, 2002; Huang & Tsai, 2003; Musa & Sim, 2010; You & O'Leary, 1999). Psychological encouragement, including social interaction, the desire for escape, adventure, relaxation, and self-exploration, is a push factor. A push factor is an underlying factor that directs someone's behavior on the wheel (Said & Maryono, 2018).

Theme 2. Appreciating and Describing Various Tourist Destinations

The primary purpose of traveling to Georgia and Armenia is to experience the various tourist destinations. Highlighting the recurring statements in their travel, they would appreciate and describe the significant places that mark their mind, hearts, and whole beings. Nature-based tourism products offer valuable experiences to visitors that can only be appreciated or stimulated using sensory elements. Visual, sound, taste, smell, touch, and mobility are sensory elements that can enhance visitors' experience in any particular destination (Zainol, 2014).

Visitor satisfaction plays a crucial role for any destination, as it helps set the location apart from others, enhances its public image, and influences tourists' decisions to return, especially when they are pleased with the destination's features and services (Atsiz & Akova, 2021; Eusébio & Vieira, 2013).

Gudauri, Georgia

Snow highlights the tourists' motivation, reflecting their appreciation for Gudauri, Georgia, as the most preferred tourist destination. The skiing resort Gudauri is situated at an altitude of 1700 meters. Its popularity as an alpine skiing center has been caused by its sustainable snow cover (Azmaiparashvili, 2014).

When tourists value a region's natural and cultural heritage and feel connected to the local environment, it can inspire a strong sense of pride and identity among residents, motivating communities to work together to support local growth and development (Ursache, 2015). Gudauri, located in Georgia, is often recognized by visitors as one of the most renowned and adventurous snow destinations during winter.

These are their statements.

Noah:

"The area is filled with snow, which makes it a winter sport for skiing. One of my unforgettable experiences was when I was able to swim in the snow."

"Gudauri is a spectacular tourist destination."

"The winter snow in Gudauri is beautiful."

"The snow in Gudauri is very white and cold and is associated with heaven here on Earth."

Arthur:

"I have the best snow experience in Gudauri; it is so cold when you touch it. The color is fine white, and I never tasted it. I make a snowball out of it."

"The highlight of the tour is going to Gudauri while

experiencing the snow."

"There were many people in Gudauri, and I used to see and touch the snow."

"Before approaching Gudauri, we passed by many mountains, which were all covered with white and shimmering snow."

In tourists' reflections on their experiences in Gudauri, Georgia, snow played a vital role in making their visit memorable and fulfilling. Ice-snow destinations are often described as peaceful, uncrowded, and naturally stunning (Sætórsdóttir *et al.*, 2019), with some locations also showcasing unique ice and snow cultural traditions (Chunhong, 2020). Seasonal transformations of the landscape, emotional calmness (Bielinis *et al.*, 2021), opportunities for solitude (Gatti *et al.*, 2022), and physical health benefits (Burtscher *et al.*, 2019) are among the key appeals of ice-snow tourism. Moreover, this form of tourism holds particular value for destinations. It plays a role in preserving and revitalizing traditional local cultures (Antipov *et al.*, 2020). It helps northern regions tap into and expand the capabilities of their tourism infrastructure (Volkov & Tishkov, 2022).

A growing number of ice-snow tourists are shifting their interest away from athletic pursuits, showing a stronger preference for relaxation-based experiences. For instance, German travelers are becoming less enthusiastic about skiing, turning to other leisure options (Steiger *et al.*, 2021). Many now favor gentler ice-snow activities such as hiking, sightseeing, and soaking in hot springs (Bausch & Unsel, 2018). In countries like Italy and France, even within ski resorts, nearly half of the visitors engage in little to no skiing. Instead, they unwind, sample local cuisine, immerse themselves in regional customs, and explore alternative experiences (Mauri & Turci, 2018). The appeal of northern destinations often lies in the opportunity to enjoy local lifestyles and seek comfort rather than participate in intense physical activities (Hall *et al.*, 2017; Jørgensen, 2020). Many travelers are especially drawn to genuine natural settings (Lundmark & Carson, 2020), and there is a clear trend toward favoring ice-snow locations that offer a diverse range of experiences (Niculescu & Busuioc, 2021).

Chronicles of Georgia

Tourists, while at rest, almost always try to get acquainted with the host country's historical and cultural sights, history, and traditions of the people inhabiting the country of destination (Bogomolova & Dovlatova, 2020). Tourists appreciated and described the Chronicles of Georgia as a historical and cultural site, fascinated by the towering heights and long-lasting structures.

Visiting the unique historical monuments is an excellent motivation for tourists to get acquainted with the history and culture of Georgia, which, due to its geopolitical location represents the place of meeting of Eastern and Western cultures (Tsitsino *et al.*, 2019). Churches or cathedrals, temples, monuments, galleries, and museums, or places with cultural values and memories are most

likely considered historical attractions. A heroic event happened in its structural building designs and layouts (Apritado, 2021).

These are their statements:

Noah:

“I can say that The Chronicles of Georgia is a masterpiece that struck my attention. The vast structures will tell the history of the Georgian King.”

“The towering height of the Chronicles of Georgia structures with the stairs is a noteworthy, unforgettable, perfect tourist destination masterpiece.”

“The Chronicles of Georgia’s gigantic structures will tell the story of everything, even without any imprints or texts; you will be amazed by the figures.”

Arthur:

“All structures were composed of heavy metal depicting the wide and tall historical portrait of Jesus Christ in the Bible. Everything is exhibited in the big and nice portrait.”

“The structures of the Chronicles of Georgia look like it is not yet finished, ruined, unfinished castles, and yet they are so beautiful.”

“Chronicles of Georgia is a normal and nice place situated in Tbilisi, Georgia.”

Georgia’s cultural heritage shows the diversity and historical value of architectural monuments, archaeological sites, and movable monuments that contribute to the country’s development of cultural tourism (Bogomolova & Dovlatova, 2020). Tourists described the Chronicles of Georgia as heavy metal structures full of history and fascinating stories about Georgia’s religious culture.

Given the role played by cultural buildings in preserving human heritage, and with the increase in exhibits and different styles and methods of presentation, there has become a specialization in cultural buildings. There was an urgent need for many facilities and specialized cultural buildings so that they could carry out their mission to society culturally, artistically, archaeologically, scientifically, and nationally and become a beacon of creativity that elevates sense and conscience (Tantawy & Essam, 2021).

Leaning Tower of Tbilisi/ Clock Tower

The clock tower atop the Rezo Gabriadze Puppet Theatre is one of the city’s most iconic sights. It is located in Georgia’s historic capital, Tbilisi. Known as the “Leaning Tower of Tbilisi,” it showcases elements of medieval Georgian architecture. More than a timekeeping structure, the tower is adorned with intricate mosaics and whimsical features that reflect Georgia’s cultural heritage and folklore.

Tourists appreciated the clock tower, which showcases a dramatic portrayal of the clock with the golden-winged angel. Built by the artist, it is designed as a unique architectural object that creates the magic effect of a fairy tale and complements the scenery of old Tbilisi streets.

With the world becoming more interconnected, acknowledging and honoring distinct cultural identities expressed through local traditions, customs, and artifacts is increasingly recognized (Ariar *et al.*, 2024). This rich

diversity of global traditions now serves as a significant driving force for travel, as many tourists are eager to explore different cultures through performing arts, crafts, rituals, culinary experiences, and various worldviews related to nature and the cosmos (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO, 2011]).

These are their statements:

Noah:

“The clock tower is beautiful, with different figures around the clock tower.”

“You have to wait for the time in which the angel will come out from the clock.”

“Well, there is one good thing that is very interesting in that clock tower: underneath the tower, you can see the most miniature clock in the world.”

Arthur:

“It is the most enormous clock in Georgia, and at the same time, there is also the smallest one on the side of the clock. I think it is the tiniest clock in the world. Moreover, it is working.”

“The functional, most miniature clock, smaller than a wristwatch, needs to be magnified by zooming in so that you can see the time.”

“The clock is just an ordinary clock that strikes every hour; it was over-popularized or sensationalized.”

Cultural and creative tourism emphasizes meaningful interaction between travelers and local cultural elements, often involving direct participation in traditional activities—an experience that positively impacts visitors’ intentions to return (Lai *et al.*, 2021; McKercher, 2002). Tourists who visited the Clock Tower, also known as the Leaning Tower, in Tbilisi, Georgia, reported that their involvement in local cultural events deepened their appreciation and understanding of the destination’s creative spirit.

Crucially, encounters with cultural expressions, values, and traditions tend to leave lasting impressions, with research suggesting that these cultural memories can shape tourists’ emotional connection to a place (H. Chen & Rahman, 2018).

Cultural and creative tourism seeks to present and revitalize cultural authenticity meaningfully. Through immersive experiences, tourists gain insights into the culture closely tied to the destination, ultimately supporting both the preservation of traditional heritage and the long-term sustainability of tourism (Lai *et al.*, 2021).

Monasteries in Georgia

Georgia is the country of the most ancient civilization and centuries-old Christian history. Its rich religious, historical, and cultural heritage can contribute to creating various tourism products and increase the country’s attractiveness (Korganashvili, 2017).

Religious tourism is significant in travel experiences, particularly at monasteries, where visitors often encounter profound emotional experiences (Obradović, 2024). Monasteries are unique places for spiritual thought, contemplation, and worship among the many places that

draw religious tourists (Ramírez & Fernández, 2018). Referred to as peaceful havens, monasteries are frequently tucked away in scenic settings and provide a chance for travelers and pilgrims to go on holy pilgrimages in search of comfort, wisdom, and spiritual contact (Aulet & Vidal, 2018; Kamenidou & Stavrianea, 2022)

These are their statements.

Noah:

“Georgia is a Christian Country and Orthodox by Faith. They have many beautiful churches.”

“The paintings, statues, and art inside the churches in Georgia are beautiful.”

“This is my first time experiencing a century-old church in Georgia. Inside the church, I discovered that some of Georgia’s kings and important leaders are buried there.”

Arthur:

“I like the churches in Georgia, like castles situated in historical places.”

“I like the monasteries and churches in Georgia, for it brings us back to old times. I enjoy the ancient structures, paintings, rusty roofs, and other areas of the monasteries.”

“I enjoyed the story behind the monasteries in Georgia, founded years ago and situated in gloomy places. The structures are in good condition and can withstand the test of time.”

“I enjoyed the old churches, and I noticed that they had no chairs inside because that is the practice of the Greek Orthodox.”

Tourists appreciated the monasteries’ structures by describing the environment, structures, paintings, and other arts, rituals, and practices. They valued the antiquity of the historical structures that stand the test of time. Furthermore, because of the tourists’ appreciative attitude, it can be assumed that they intend to revisit the monasteries of Georgia as tourist destinations.

Monastery (monastic) tourism is the term used to describe visiting monasteries for religious or tourism-related purposes. As van Tongeren, (2014) states, some people go to monasteries only for spiritual or religious purposes, while others visit for a positive and enjoyable experience that does not carry any primarily religious aspirations (Obradović, 2024).

Religious tourism has its varieties: pilgrimages and cognitive tours of religious orientation. The pilgrimage involves participation in religious cults (pilgrims usually profess the religion they came to worship at holy places), and cognitive tours of a religious orientation usually involve visits to monasteries, temples, museums, exhibitions, etc. Moreover, religious tourists may or may not be adherents to the religion whose objects are visited, and can also be unbelievers (Korganashvili, 2017).

Garni Temple in Armenia

Armenia is an attractive tourism destination with high potential for development due to its rich history and culture, beautiful nature and countryside, good tourism infrastructure, and other important resources. The main types of tourism include historical and cultural tourism,

religious tourism, wellness and resort tourism, sports tourism, eco- and agro-tourism, gastronomy tourism, and adventure tourism (Tovmasyan & Johann, 2018).

The temple of Garni is the only surviving Hellenistic temple in the territory of the Republic of Armenia. According to the inscription, it was built by King Tiridates I in 77 A.D. and was devoted to the god of the Sun, Mihr-Mithra (Helios). The origin of the definition of the architectural type of the temple is very controversial. Built in the 1st century B.C. by the influence of the Hellenistic Roman period, the Temple of Garni, with its architectural form, is similar to Roman temples (Lazareva, 2015).

The image of the tourist attraction is viewed as the whole idea represented in the traveler’s mind, which could result from the perception of the characteristics associated with the place they are visiting (Groen, 2012).

Tourists appreciated the Temple of Garni for its structures and how it survived the test of time. The design of the pagan temple structures was one of the aesthetic factors relating to cultural tourist destinations.

These are their statements.

Noah:

“Nothing is worshiped inside the Garni Temple today. The temple stands empty, with no visible idols, but meaningful inscriptions and ancient carvings remain. Imagine—a structure that has lasted for nearly two millennia, standing as a witness to Armenia’s deep and layered history.”

“I have many pictures of the Garni Temple in Armenia. Different views from left, right, back, and inside the temple.”

Arthur:

“Garni Temple is the name of that area. It is beautiful, and outside that area, there were available souvenir items.” Appreciation is an evaluation based on admiration and recognition of good qualities of aesthetic values (Adiwibowo *et al.*, 2015). Based on the statements above, tourists look at every detail of the Garni Temple structure. They value and appreciate the structures’ different aesthetic views from various perspectives. Furthermore, the historical features of the structures provide meaningful importance and recognition to the tourists.

When assessing a building’s aesthetic appeal, key aspects of its façade should be considered, such as color, materials used, and overall proportions (Coetier, 2002). Askari *et al.*, (2014) further emphasized that several visual components influence the perception of historic structures. These include architectural style, form, texture, building materials, color, dimensions, scale, and decorative features (Adiwibowo *et al.*, 2015).

Monasteries in Armenia

Inspired by religion, most Armenian structures, especially medieval churches, were built with distinctive architectural features, representing their unique style in the international arena. Some of those buildings’ religious, historical, and natural values were fundamental

for their designation as UNESCO World Heritage Sites (Sanasaryan & Viñals, 2020).

Tourists have a great and satisfying experience exploring the monasteries in Armenia. The accessibility and location of the destination play an important role in appreciating and describing the monastery. Based on their statements, they valued the Monasteries because of their historical structures, scenic view location, and recreational activities in the destination. Moreover, the tourists highlighted the need for walking and hiking while exploring the site.

Knowing the attributes of tourist destinations that satisfy tourists is very important for decision-makers in the tourism business (Aksu *et al.*, 2010; Wullur & Samehe, 2020). Tourist satisfaction indicates that tourist destinations can meet their needs and desires. Tourists who are satisfied with a tourist destination may be due to their attractiveness (tourist objects and attractions), affordable prices, cleanliness, and beauty, as well as other attributes such as accommodation, transportation, cafes and bars, sports activities, travel agents, information services (Aliman *et al.*, 2016; Mansouri & Ujang, 2016).

These are their statements.

Noah:

“The monastery stood uphill from Lake Sevan, requiring many steps to reach its ancient grounds. In winter, parts of the vast lake would freeze, creating a stunning landscape. Inside the monastery, sacred artifacts and centuries-old carvings can be found.”

“Those old monasteries in Armenia were built on beautiful natural sites. The areas were untouched and preserved.”

“There was overflowing of spring water inside century-old monasteries in Armenia, and the water is still potable for drinking.”

Arthur:

“The monastery was situated near the stunning canyon. If you are going to look at the edge of the canyon, you will realize that it is very steep and wide. The distance range shows the beautiful views from the other part of the area where houses were built.”

“You need to hike to reach the old monastery on the mountaintop. The monastery is old and rusty, but the place is beautiful.”

Churches and monasteries are primarily places of worship where people meet to honor their faith and celebrate significant life events, but they are also treasure houses of heritage, history, and community. Therefore, these places have great potential to attract visitors and provide them with an enjoyable and worthwhile experience (Sanasaryan & Viñals, 2020). Aulet and Vidal (2018) emphasize that active religious sites represent enduring cultural and spiritual values associated with a specific region. These structures not only preserve and express the religious identity of a community but also illustrate the interplay between sacred traditions and the architectural or historical significance of the site. In doing so, they bridge spiritual meaning with the cultural and monumental heritage of the place.

The monasteries in Armenia were built on the mountaintop. Therefore, tourists need to experience walking or hiking while exploring the monasteries, along with their appreciation and recognition of the natural scenic view of the destination. Furthermore, learning from tourists’ experiences as explorers of the monasteries in Armenia indicates that the diversity of activities along the routes influences tourists’ walking experiences. This finding implies that spatial features such as accessibility, location, and appreciation determine tourists’ satisfaction. A walking experience is also considerably influenced by the managerial, environmental, and social features and diverges over time and space. Meanwhile, their management will influence walking experiences (den Breejen, 2007; Hugo, 1999; Mansouri & Ujang, 2016). The location of tourism infrastructure and planning provides tourism services and facilities, the provision of walkways for walking, and provides areas with a beautiful view that they needed for awareness of the pattern of behavior of tourists (Movahed & Ghalehtemouri, 2020).

Theme 3: Activities in the Destinations

Tourism, more than any other field of activity, is dependent on the environment because it represents the leading resource and tourist attraction factor on which depends the development of various tourism activities and their quality and components, this way facilitating, inhibiting, and even hindering their development (Ciangă & Sorocovschi, 2017). Tourism activities seek to unite natural attractions, artificial tourism, and cultural tourism in a particular area supported by the management of attractions, accommodations, and equipped with other facilities (Fakari *et al.*, 2023).

This theme had two sub-themes: Activities in Gudauri, Georgia, and Activities within the Mother of Georgia Statue. Activities in Gudauri present tourists’ experiences in winter tourism, focusing on snow activities, while several activities within the Mother Georgia statue include sightseeing, picture taking, and entertainment while appreciating the tourist destinations.

Activities in Gudauri, Georgia

Engaging in winter tourism is the primary motivation for tourists in Georgia and Armenia. Snow activity was the tour’s highlight because the snow is unusual to them considering their nationality and geographical backgrounds, as they reside and work in tropical Asian countries.

Nature-based Ice and Snow Tourism is a form of tourism within the ecological tourism category. The uniqueness of IST is that ice and snow resources are the primary attractions at these tourist destinations (Yang *et al.*, 2023). Playing with the snow, picture-taking, sightseeing, and dining were unforgettable recreational activities for tourists in Gudauri, Georgia.

These are their statements.

Noah:

“I went rolling around in the snow, throwing snowballs.”

“Taking pictures of the snow, a beautiful lake comparable to Switzerland.”

Arthur:

“Cable car rides and sightseeing going up and down the mountainside were the activities.”

“Playing with the snow, eating pizza, and drinking hot chocolate were among our activities.”

“Picture taking in the snow and going up to the highest peak of the Gudauri mountain.”

Ice and Snow Tourism is any activity in a natural or man-made landscape with natural or artificial ice and snow resources. These tourism activities integrate sightseeing, vacation, sports, competitive events, leisure and entertainment, scientific exploration, hands-on inquiry-based learning, and popularization of scientific knowledge, and have appreciation, participation, experience, stimulation, and fitness characteristics (Yang *et al.*, 2023).

Depending on the tourists’ statements, it can be interpreted that while engaging in winter and snow tourism, tourists can also explore many activities that are not directly related to snow sports tourism. These activities may include picture-taking, dining, sightseeing, and appreciating nature.

Activities Around the Mother of Georgia Statue

Kartlis Deda, the mother of Georgia, symbolizes the city of Tbilisi and carries a bowl of wine for her friends in one hand and a sword for her enemies in the other. It was erected for the city’s 1500th anniversary, and in 1997, it received an update: now holding her head up high and crowned with laurels.

Tourists were able to visit the Mother Georgia Statue. Around the city of Tbilisi, many tourist attractions were explored. Taking photos, sightseeing, and riding on a cable car were the outdoor activities experienced by the tourists. Outdoor recreation is any activity that requires a place in the open air and involves interactions with each other and the natural environment. Various activities, from playgrounds to playfields and wilderness trips to camping, are included in outdoor recreation and do not just refer to activities done in parks or open spaces (Regidor *et al.*, 2022).

Socialization emerges through individuals’ engagement in various activities, as people often participate in various experiences. Recreational pursuits, in particular, provide numerous opportunities for individuals to actively participate and connect with others (Khanum *et al.*, 2020). These are their statements.

Noah:

“After I had unloaded from the cable car, I took pictures of the beautiful spots in both old and new Georgia.”

“I observed that a particular guy was holding a Parrot for picture-taking. There was a fee upon availing of the photo opportunities.”

“You can take a picture of a ruined monastery in the mountains. Behind it, there were natural reserves intended for sightseeing.”

Arthur:

“You watch the entire city of Georgia, and you will see different familiar places where you recently realized that you previously visited the place because, for once, I was accommodated there.”

“Around the Statue of Mother Georgia, you can see the entire city of Tbilisi. Collecting memories through picture-taking and sightseeing were done.”

According to UNWTO international experts, the second most important motive for tourists, after the wish to get to know a new culture, lifestyle, and culinary traditions, is the health-improving and therapeutic purpose of tourist trips with stays in the country, seaside, mountain health resorts, and health facilities, as well as in houses and recreation centers, boarding houses, which provide rehabilitation, animation and leisure activities, but do not provide medical services (Bogomolova & Dovlatova, 2019).

Taking photos and sightseeing at the various tourist attractions around the statue of Mother Georgia dominantly were done by the tourists. Familiarizing and appreciating the historical sites in Tbilisi were also ventured. In leisure and sightseeing activities, people from the tourist business environment or social environment get the message for the upcoming places full of beautiful imagination, hold high expectations, but are interested in tourism activities; some motives, the effect of “AIDA,” that is, Attention, interest, desire, and action (Kung, 2018).

Theme 4: Food and Drinks in Georgia

Food contributes significantly to tourist satisfaction at a destination (Yousaf & Xiucheng, 2018). Local food and tourism have an important relationship, reflected in the increasing number of people traveling and searching for unique culinary experiences (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010) (Long *et al.*, 2023).

Two subthemes emerged in this theme: Food and Wine in Georgia. Tourists highlighted the famous pork and King Kali servings as famous dishes in Georgia. Variations of wine were the famous hospitality beverage in Georgia.

Food in Georgia

Exploring local cuisine has become a significant means of experiencing and connecting with a destination’s culture. Tasting traditional foods offers travelers not only sensory enjoyment but also cultural insight, social interaction, and even a sense of distinction and prestige. This growing interest has given rise to food tourism, where the primary motivation for travel is to gain meaningful and memorable encounters through culinary experiences (Meladze, 2015). Due to its strategic geographic position, Georgia has a long and complex history shaped by successive invasions from civilizations such as the Greeks, Persians, and Ottomans. These historical interactions have impacted the country’s cultural landscape, especially in areas bordering other regions, where remnants of ancient and Islamic worldviews are still evident. This unique cultural

fusion is also deeply reflected in Georgia's culinary heritage (Söderlind, 2014b).

The diverse influences throughout Georgia's history have shaped a rich and varied food culture, leading to the development of distinct culinary traditions across the country. Georgian cuisine is widely recognized as one of the most expressive elements of its national identity and cultural heritage. Each region in Georgia is marked by its own environmental and agricultural conditions, which have influenced the evolution of regional dishes and dietary habits rooted in the traditions of various ethnic communities (Lamara & Maka, 2019).

For many international visitors, experiencing Georgian cuisine for the first time is often unforgettable. Tourists frequently praise the flavors and aromas of traditional dishes, with items such as pork and "King Kali" (likely referring to khinkali, a popular Georgian dumpling) leaving lasting impressions. As a predominantly Christian nation, Georgia permits pork consumption, making it widely available in local markets and restaurants (Meladze, 2015). The richness of Georgia's culinary landscape enhances the tourist experience and serves as a living testament to the country's layered cultural history.

These are their statements.

Noah:

"Pork is the usual food in Georgia, available in their restaurants. Georgia is a Christian Country."

"Several pork menus that I ordered and were served during that day. Some of my companions ordered Chicken, while I did not choose beef because I am hypertensive."

"We went to a celebration at a particular Georgian restaurant and learned about the different Georgian dishes. There is Khinkali, which is like Siomai, but there is a soup inside."

Arthur:

"The food in Georgia is okay. They have this Dimsum called Khinkali. Once you bite it, it tastes mushy with the juice filling inside. It was recommended that when you bite Khinkali, you must suck the juice."

"The food in Georgia is delicious, and with the fusion of Arabic."

"The food in Georgia is typical, and they serve a pork menu."

Georgians created diverse food and drink based on the natural variety to protect their health and satisfy their feeding needs. Most foreign tourists try Georgian traditional dishes for the first time and acknowledge their best taste and aroma at once (Lamara & Maka, 2019). Based on the recurring statements from the tourists, they emphasize the typical and delicious cuisine in Georgia – the Khinkali. Khinkali is considered a national dish and can be described as meat dumplings, where the minced meat is with herbs or without. There are also vegetarian versions of the dish with fillings of mashed potatoes, cheese, or mushrooms. Many Georgians do not consider the vegetarian versions as real khinkali. However, the version with potatoes is often eaten during fasting periods (Söderlind, 2014a).

Wines of Georgia

Georgia, located in the South Caucasus, is considered one of the world's oldest wine-producing countries, with winemaking traditions dating back 8,000 years (McGovern *et al.*, 2017). As the wine industry expands, the country is gradually becoming a key destination for wine tourism. One of Georgia's unique winemaking techniques involves fermenting grapes in large clay vessels. This ancient method has received international recognition and has been officially acknowledged by UNESCO for its cultural importance and historical value (Meladze, 2016).

Tourists were able to experience various types of wines in Georgia. They are aware that Georgia is the world's largest wine producer. In modern-day Georgia, wine is considered one of the country's most recognized and distinguished export commodities and is even the country's most valuable agricultural commodity by percentage of GDP (Namchavadze, 2020).

These are their statements.

Noah:

"I was able to taste the different types of wines in Georgia. Georgia indeed serves the best wine in the world."

"Georgia has the unique fermentation of its grapes, and I do not know the secret to why loyal consumers repeatedly availed of its wine products. They have their winery vineyard."

"The famous drink in Georgia is wine."

Arthur:

"When it comes to wine, Georgia has so many to offer. They also have a complimentary wine tasting"

"Georgia is known as the wine capital of the world. They have many types of wines."

"Georgians are wine lovers; they offer different kinds of wine. They have an exclusive wine which is manufactured by a family-owned business. The taste of wine is sweet, and it was the best wine I have ever tasted."

Most small wineries offer accommodation and wine-related tourism activities at their facilities, as the income from the wine tourism activities is a substantial source for households in rural areas. Therefore, a country's visitor number and tourism-related revenues seem to depend upon the size of its wine production (Ghvanidze *et al.*, 2022).

Tourists confirmed that wine is the most popular drink in Georgia, and they have their best quality comparable to other best wines worldwide. Moreover, tourists can explore wine-tasting activities while visiting wine establishments in Georgia. The wine tourist needs to be connected with the product origin through visitation to the country or region where the wine is produced (Bruwer *et al.*, 2018). Wine tourism is a complex relationship between the wine region or country as a tourist destination, wineries, and the consumer as a visitor (Bruwer & Lesschaeve, 2012).

Theme 5: Hospitality in Armenia

During hospitality encounters, smiles and eye contact are frequently exchanged between hotel guests and employees. Nevertheless, the relative efficiency of eye contact and smiles as experience triggers in guest-employee hospitality

encounters has remained unexplored in previous studies in hospitality, including those of psychology, health care, sports, and law (Islam, 2023). Today, hospitality employees must be efficient in smiling and eye contact with guests (Ferm & Thaichon, 2021; Fulmer *et al.*, 2009). Smiles and kind gestures are important to tourists. During their visit to Armenia, tourists felt welcomed by the warm hospitality of the people.

These are their statements.

Noah:

“In Armenia, most people, especially in the grocery and souvenir shops, wear a smile on their faces.”

“The Armenian guests in the accommodation gave us complimentary wine.”

“The people from Armenia are very accommodating.”

Arthur:

“Armenians are friendly, accommodating, and helpful people. Lily, the caretaker of the accommodation, was very accommodating because she washed my clothes using the washing machine and the dryer. She also folded my clothes and placed them in our room.”

“The people are so lovely and the best in Armenia. Very accommodating and humble.”

“The Armenians are willing to help you if they see you struggling to search for something in the grocery stores.”

Hospitality and hospitableness are both used to describe what a host offers to his or her guests. However, instead of focusing on this provision of hospitality, the present research focuses on the reception of hospitality by recipients. Therefore, the term ‘experience of hospitality’ will be used, referring to the experience of staff behavior and the experience of the physical service environment, including its facilities (Pijls *et al.*, 2017).

From the tourists’ point of view, the Armenian people are friendly, genuine, accommodating, and willing to extend their helping hands. They have a people-oriented culture. Personal relationships sometimes have a reciprocal nature (Swarbrooke, 2007). Some studies assume that locals are attracted to tourists because they assume that the keenness to develop personal relationships is a sign of friendliness (Cohen, 2000).

According to Kozak and Rimmington, (1998), when tourists visit a destination, they seek more than one experience at the destination. They stay in accommodations, go out to eat and drink, seek entertainment, and, in the process, communicate and interact with the local people. Hospitality is thus an expression of friendliness, receptiveness, and welcome by residents to tourists arriving in their community (Suanmali, 2014).

Friendliness and hospitality of the locals are some of the principal destination attributes that lead to tourist satisfaction (Jenkins, 1999; Kozak & Rimmington, 1998; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). It is assumed that tourists would hardly consider visiting places with high-risk factors. On the other hand, visitors’ interest in the community is a source of local pride. Seeing visitors’ interest in the community makes residents appreciate local resources often taken for granted (Glenn, 2001; Udoh, 2019).

Theme 6: Challenges Experienced by the Tourists

Travelers can encounter various difficulties during their trips, including unforeseen costs, environmental issues, and concerns about safety and security (Chockalingam & Ganesh, 2010). In this study, three key sub-themes were identified as significant challenges tourists face: extended layovers, issues with accommodation, and communication difficulties due to language differences.

Long Layover

Although the term “stopover” lacks a universally accepted definition in academic literature, the International Air Transport Association defines it as a stay of at least 24 hours at a connecting location during a journey (Pike *et al.*, 2018). Studies have shown that several factors—such as travelers’ sensitivity to pricing, membership in frequent-flyer programs, length of the trip, and a desire for new experiences—can significantly influence the intention of long-haul leisure travelers, whether they are visiting for the first time or returning, to include a stopover in their itinerary (Kotsi *et al.*, 2023; Masiero *et al.*, 2020).

Under this sub-theme, tourists were unhappy with the hostile experience of long layovers in the airport. They had to wait for 11 hours doing nothing.

These are their statements.

Noah:

“It was an unforgettable experience when I had a long layover. From Doha, flying to Dubai takes only an hour and 25 minutes. I struggle with the 11-hour layover in Dubai, which is going to Georgia.”

“When we had waited for an 11-hour layover, we needed to book an Airport Hotel, which increased our expenses. This is one of my struggles.”

“The usual layover or stopover I had experienced was 3 hours; imagine this was 11 hours, considered half a day.”

Arthur:

“I hate waiting; waiting is tiring if you are traveling. As much as possible, I want to have at least 2 2-hour or 3-hour waiting periods, but going beyond the 3-hour waiting period is not already conducive.”

“The problem was the long waiting time for boarding time from Dubai to Georgia.”

Tourists taking connecting flights to a destination can either have a layover, which includes waiting at the airport or less than a day-long trip to the destination, or a stopover, which involves a more extended stay in comparison with a layover. Previous studies define stopover length as one to four nights, following average night stays at main stopover destinations (Pike *et al.*, 2018). Vigolo *et al.*, (2017) reviewed the literature on the travel behavior of senior travelers. They reported the anxiety that older tourists experience about long-haul travel due to flight duration and health risks.

The tourists expressed annoyance at the long layover. To avoid this inconvenience, tickets should be booked personally.

Challenges in the Accommodation

Motives for visiting a destination may vary by the type

of accommodation chosen (Radojevic *et al.*, 2018; Yavas & Babakus, 2005). This observation raises the question about the likelihood that people staying in different types of accommodation might want to do different things, visit different attractions, and participate in different activities while in the destination (McKercher *et al.*, 2023). In this study, only one person arranged the accommodation of the tourists; therefore, a series of transfers were executed during the tour. Moreover, tourists felt limited freedom regarding their accommodation preferences.

The selection of accommodation types is a complicated and often messy process (Li *et al.*, 2013; Nutsugbodo *et al.*, 2022), with the prevailing literature tending to focus on either the features of the accommodation property itself or the profile of the individual selecting the different types of accommodation (McKercher *et al.*, 2023).

These are their statements.

Noah:

“When transferring from one accommodation to another, you will walk along rocky plain pavement. I felt uncomfortable because I was wearing my winter boots.”

“I struggled. At one point, our accommodation was at the top of the mountain, and during our hotel transfer, I was uncomfortable because of the inconvenience of carrying and transferring luggage.”

“It is a challenge on my part to transfer from different accommodations. You have to imagine carrying a hand carry luggage.”

Arthur:

“From the first day, we rented a small lodge. You do not know if it is a hotel or a hostel or something. And then, on the second day, that is the part that... It was the tiring part, which was the accommodation transfer. (Tbilisi, Georgia)”

“Now and then, we transferred from one accommodation to another. It became a hassle on our part. That was never enjoyable.”

“The entire trip is wasted chiefly due to transferring from one accommodation to another.”

Selecting an accommodation facility is highly significant to the traveler but is very complex and complicated (Li *et al.*, 2013). Understanding travelers’ needs and preferences can aid hoteliers in providing tailor-made services to hotel guests, which are essential in increasing occupancy rates. Over the years, hoteliers have desired to identify factors influencing the selection of suitable accommodation facilities by guests (Lockyer, 2005; Nutsugbodo *et al.*, 2022). Tourists’ comfort while at the destination is crucial. Transferring from one accommodation to another is tiring and annoying. Therefore, it is important to note that tourists should take part in deciding on their preferred accommodation.

Language Barrier

Tourism and language are closely linked due to the international movement of travelers and their interactions with people who often speak different languages. Despite this connection, language’s role in community-based

tourism (CBT) has received limited scholarly attention. CBT can influence local communities’ socioeconomic development, enhance language abilities, and support the preservation of cultural traditions (Nomnian *et al.*, 2020). English communication problems in tourism services have been documented in famous tourist-attractive cities (Ka-Kan-dee & Nonthapot, 2020; Maleerat & Nonthapot, 2020; Rajprasis *et al.*, 2015; Shehu & Shittu, 2015). Language barrier is the main problem of the tourists in communicating with their needs and queries. The English language is the most preferred language of tourists when they travel.

These are their statements.

Noah:

“Their language is complex.”

“Because of the language barrier, sometimes they will be misinterpreted.”

“Our tour guide said they spoke their local language, but we experienced difficulties communicating.”

Arthur:

“We have miscommunication because of the language.”

“It is hard to understand their language; I cannot understand their pronunciation.”

“Sometimes I find it a bit challenging to communicate because not everyone speaks English.”

Communication challenges stemming from language differences are often at the core of various issues across multiple sectors, including healthcare, aviation, maritime operations, business, and education (Abuarqoub, 2019). In the context of tourism, language plays a vital and interconnected role. With the rise of globalization and increased tourist mobility, languages and cultures naturally cross borders, resulting in the dynamic exchange and interaction of linguistic and cultural elements worldwide (Thurlow *et al.*, 2010). As many travelers and hosts in tourism destinations experience, language barriers can pose significant obstacles to host-guest interactions and cross-cultural communication (Cohen & Cooper, 1986; Dolezal, 2015; Nomnian & Jhaiyanuntana, 2020). English was the language of the tourists in Georgia and Armenia. Challenges arose when some local people in the two countries spoke their native language. Based on the tourists’ observations, locals speak Russian when communicating in their countries.

Theme 7: Recommendations

Tourists are often highly driven to seek recommendations and insights from others’ travel experiences to minimize potential risks and uncertainties associated with unfamiliar destinations (Cheng *et al.*, 2019). Unlike tangible products, tourism experiences cannot be physically examined or tested beforehand, making prior shared experiences particularly valuable (Kirilenko *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, travelers are eager to share their journeys, as tourism offers an escape from the monotony and restrictions of everyday life, allowing them to engage in experiences that differ significantly from their usual routines (Filep & Laing, 2019; Sarial-Abi *et al.*, 2020; Wong *et al.*, 2020; Xu

& Zhang, 2021). Sharing travel experiences has become a key aspect of tourist behavior and has significantly influenced the development and dynamics of the tourism industry (F. Chen *et al.*, 2020; Su *et al.*, 2021).

Recommendations and suggestions from tourists are important because they give a hint, guide, and anticipation for future tourists' decision-making.

These are their statements.

Noah:

"I advise and convince them to have a snow experience in Georgia and Armenia."

"I convinced them to travel to Georgia and Armenia because of the affordable trips and beautiful places."

"I highly recommend Georgia and Armenia because the trip is affordable, it has beautiful spots, and Georgia is a big country."

Arthur:

"Visit Georgia and Armenia if you are a nature lover and history fanatic."

"For relaxation, I recommend Armenia. For nature sightseeing and snow, go to Georgia and Armenia."

"If you want a snow experience, go to Georgia."

Snow is the usual motivation for tourists. They recommend traveling to Georgia and Armenia because the travel is affordable, worthwhile, and educational.

Tourists must perceive a destination's image as a preferred travel choice. Destination marketing can be facilitated by better understanding tourists' needs and motives and tailoring provisions accordingly (Ragavan *et al.*, 2014).

Evolved Conceptual Framework

Travel motivation influences the tourists' destination selection based on their experiences traveling to Georgia and Armenia. Snow was the main reason for travel for Asian visitors from the Philippines who were employed in the Middle East. Wu, (2015) claims that travel motivation refers to personal goals that compel someone to take a vacation for pleasure, such as stress relief, enjoying the outdoors, seeing stunning scenery, and learning (Pereira *et al.*, 2022).

The different tourist spots in Georgia and Armenia are the primary reasons for coming there. Emphasizing the travelers' repeated remarks, they recognized and characterized the important locations that left an impression on their minds, hearts, and entire beings. Products for nature-based tourism provide tourists with worthwhile experiences that are only fully recognized or stimulated by sensory aspects. The five senses—taste, smell, touch, motion, and sound—can all improve a visitor's experience at any given location (Zainol, 2014). The Leaning Tower of Tbilisi, the Mother of Georgia Statue, the Garni Temple in Armenia, the Chronicles of Georgia, and the Monasteries of Georgia and Armenia allowed visitors to showcase their experiences with snow in Gudauri, Georgia; heritage, culture, and architecture; and sightseeing and photo ops.

Walking tours around the Mother of Georgia Statue and winter tourism in Gudauri, Georgia, are two activities

that can be done in Georgia. People from the tourism industry's business or social circles learn through leisure and sightseeing activities that although they have high expectations for the future and exciting destinations, they are drawn to travel for a variety of reasons, including the "AIDA" effect—attention, interest, desire, and action (Kung, 2018).

Georgian cuisine and beverages, such as its delectable Khinkali and pork dishes, astound visitors. Tasting one of the world's most well-known and expensive wines is a source of pride for tourists. Georgian food reflects the richest and oldest culture in the nation. Every area has unique agricultural and natural resources. Distinctiveness resulted in the unique eating practices of ethnic groups (food type, preparation method, frequency of eating). Furthermore, UNESCO has added Georgia's ancient winemaking technique—fermenting grapes in egg-shaped earthenware vessels—to its list of world heritage sites (Meladze, 2016).

It is also critical to highlight the visitors' remarkable interactions with Armenians. The sincere, kind, modest, and helpful people who, in one way or another, were recognized by the tourists and had a positive impact on their high degree of happiness while having an extraordinary exploration of the stunning nation of Armenia are exemplified by the hospitality of the Armenian people. One of the main characteristics of a place that contributes to visitor pleasure is the friendliness and hospitality of the inhabitants (Jenkins, 1999; Kozak & Rimmington, 1998; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). It is a given that travelers would rarely choose to go to locations with significant risk. Nonetheless, locals are incredibly delighted by tourists' interest in the area. Residents become more grateful for the community's resources, which are sometimes taken for granted when they witness visitors' interest in them (Glenn, 2001; Udoh, 2019).

The long delays at the airport had left travelers unhappy with their bad experiences. They had to spend eleven hours doing nothing except waiting at the airport. The long delay had left the travelers feeling less than satisfied. This would suggest purchasing your tickets in advance to avoid this problem when traveling. The term "Stopover" lacks a definite meaning in the literature; nonetheless, the International Air Transport Association defines it as spending at least 24 hours at a midpoint of the voyage (Pike *et al.*, 2018). Price sensitivity, frequent flyer status, trip length, and thrill-seeking have all been linked to long-haul leisure travelers' intentions to make a stopover visit, whether they are first-time or return visitors (Kotsi *et al.*, 2023; Masiero *et al.*, 2020).

While the group was in Tbilisi, Georgia, multiple transfers occurred because one person made traveler's hotel accommodations. Furthermore, guests felt that their options for lodging were limited. When guests arrive at the location, their comfort is the priority. Transferring from one location to another is often unpleasant and tiring. It is important to remember that guests ought to be involved in choosing the accommodations of their choice.

Choosing an accommodation facility is a critical decision for travelers but also tricky (Li *et al.*, 2013). Hoteliers can increase occupancy rates by offering visitors customized services and thoroughly understanding their wants and preferences. Over the years, hoteliers have sought to determine the elements that impact visitors' choice of appropriate lodging (Lockyer, 2005; Nutsugbodo *et al.*, 2022).

One of the main challenges travelers may encounter is language differences, which can make it a bit harder to express their needs. Many visitors to Georgia and Armenia are more comfortable using English when communicating. However, as residents of both countries primarily speak their native languages, this sometimes leads to minor communication barriers. Visitors have observed that locals often engage with one another in their own languages, which reflects the rich cultural and linguistic heritage of the region. Language limitations can impede host-guest relationships and cross-cultural communication, as many visitors and hosts encounter

when visiting tourist sites (Cohen & Cooper, 1986; Dolezal, 2015; Nomnian & Jhaiyanuntana, 2020).

Tourists' tips and recommendations are important because they give other tourists a direction, a road map, and an expectation for their decisions. Usually, tourists come because of the snow. They recommended going to Georgia and Armenia because the trips are affordable, valuable, and educational. Because tourism cannot be physically displayed or inspected in advance, unlike material consumption (Kirilenko *et al.*, 2021), travelers are highly motivated to seek out advice and insights from other people's shared experiences in order to reduce risk and uncertainty (Cheng *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, tourists often strongly desire to share their travel experiences with others (Wong *et al.*, 2020). This is mainly because tourism provides an opportunity to break away from the routines and limitations of everyday life (Sarial-Abi *et al.*, 2020), offering a chance to immerse themselves in experiences that are vastly different from their usual environment (Filep & Laing, 2019; Xu & Zhang, 2021).

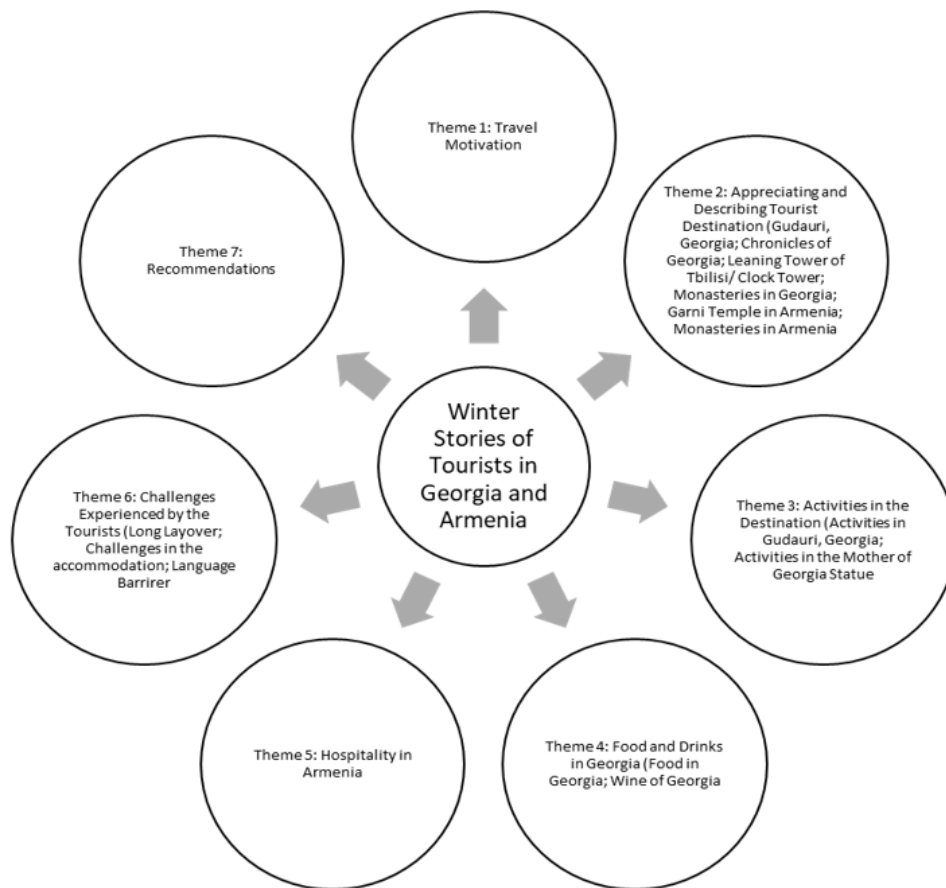


Figure 1: Simulacrum

CONCLUSIONS

Traveling to Georgia and Armenia offered tourists unforgettable experiences woven with the beauty of snow, the grandeur of ancient landmarks, the richness of culture, and the genuine warmth of local hospitality. Despite minor

challenges along the way, every moment from standing beneath the falling snow to savoring traditional dishes and exploring sacred sites became part of a lasting memory, inspiring travelers to cherish their journeys and dream of returning to these extraordinary lands.

The true novelty of this study lies in its powerful convergence of demographic depth, geographical rarity, and sensory-cultural richness, all explored through the distinct lens of Filipino expatriate individuals often overlooked in mainstream tourism literature. By shedding light on emerging destinations like Georgia and Armenia, and capturing the perspectives of snow-seeking travelers from the tropics, this research goes beyond conventional inquiry. It becomes a vivid tapestry of emotion, culture, and discovery, offering a rare and resonant contribution to the evolving landscape of global tourism narratives.

This study makes a significant scholarly contribution by blending behavioral theory, cultural analysis, and experiential tourism within a specific demographic and geographic context. It enhances the academic discourse on emerging tourism markets, highlights the interplay between motivation and memory, and provides evidence-based insights for advancing sustainable and inclusive tourism development.

In fulfilling this research gap, the study contributes a rich, intersectional perspective that blends demographic specificity, emotional narrative, and logistical insight. It adds depth to the understanding of how non-Western, tropical-region tourists engage with cold-climate heritage destinations and emphasizes the need for culturally responsive and experience-centered tourism strategies in emerging global markets.

REFERENCES

- Ab Karim, S., & Chi, C. G. Q. (2010). Culinary tourism as a destination attraction: An empirical examination of destinations' food image. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 19(6), 531–555.
- Abuarqoub, I. A. S. (2019). Language barriers to effective communication. *Utopia y Praxis Latinoamericana*, 24(Extra6), 64–77.
- Adiwibowo, R. S., Widodo, P., & Santosa, I. (2015). Correlations between Public Appreciation of Historical Building and Intention to Visit Heritage Building Reused as Retail Store. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 184(August 2014), 357–364. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.05.103>
- Ahmed, S. K. (2024). The pillars of trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*, 2, 100051. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.glmedi.2024.100051>
- Aksu, A., İcigen, T., & Ehtiyar, R. (2010). A comparison of tourist expectations and satisfaction: A case study from Antalya region of Turkey. *Turizam*, 14(2), 66–77. <https://doi.org/10.5937/turizam1002066a>
- Aliman, N. K., Hashim, S. M., Wahid, S. D. M., & Harudin, S. (2016). Tourists' Satisfaction with a Destination: An Investigation on Visitors to Langkawi Island. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, 8(3), 173. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijms.v8n3p173>
- Anney, V. N. (2015). Ensuring the quality of the findings of qualitative research: looking at trustworthiness criteria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 5(2), 272–281.
- Antipov, S. K., Anosova, N. E., Aladyshkin, I. V., Kolomeyzev, I. V., & Ishankhodjaeva, Z. R. (2020). Ways of developing tourism logistics in the far north of Russia. *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, 434(1), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/434/1/012012>
- Apritado, J. M. M. (2021). Tourist Motivations and Expectations of the Historical Attractions in CALABARZON Region. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management and Sustainable Development*, 9(2), 22–30.
- Arghutashvili, V. (2018). the Role of Tourism in Economic Development of Georgia. *Journal of International Management Studies*, 18(2), 59–64. <https://doi.org/10.18374/jims-18-2.6>
- Ariar, M. D., Gaddi, J. A. G., Diaz, S. E., Nebria, G. G., Orillaneda, E. M. R., Pontillo, K. M. A., & Serato, J. C. (2024). Awareness and Appreciation of Local Cultural Heritage of Surigao City. *International Journal of Current Science Research and Review*, 07(05), 2919–2929. <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijcsrr/v7-i5-53>
- Askari, H., Dola, K. B., & Soltani, S. (2014). An evaluation of the elements and characteristics of historical building façades in the context of Malaysia. *Urban Design International*, 19, 113–124.
- Atoyan, K. (2016). Tourism Industry in Armenia: Evaluation and Perspectives. *International Journal of Humanities and Management Sciences*, 4(1), 1–10.
- Atsiz, O., & Akova, O. (2021). Cultural destination attributes, overall tourist satisfaction and tourist loyalty: First timers versus repeaters. *Advances in Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 9(2), 268–291. <https://doi.org/10.30519/ahtr.894577>
- Aulet, S., & Vidal, D. (2018). Tourism and religion: sacred spaces as transmitters of heritage values. *Church, Communication and Culture*, 3(3), 237–259. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23753234.2018.1542280>
- Azmaiparashvili, M. (2014). Georgian Resort - Recreational Areas and Prospects of Tourism Development. *GISAP: Biology, Veterinary Medicine and Agricultural Sciences*, 6, 3–5. <https://doi.org/10.18007/gisap:bvmas.v0i6.1011>
- Barrett, M. S., & Stauffer, S. L. (2009). *Narrative inquiry in music education: Troubling certainty*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Bausch, T., & Unseld, C. (2018). Winter tourism in Germany is much more than skiing! Consumer motives and implications to Alpine destination marketing. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 24(3), 203–217.
- Bielinis, E., Janeczko, E., Takayama, N., Zawadzka, A., Slupska, A., Piętko, S., Lipponen, M., & Bielinis, L. (2021). The effects of viewing a winter forest landscape with the ground and trees covered in snow on the psychological relaxation of young Finnish adults: A pilot study. *PLoS ONE*, 16(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0244799>
- Bogomolova, E. S., & Dovlatova, A. (2019). Recreational Tourism as a Growth Driver for Tourist Destination.

- In *The 4th International Conference on Economy, Judicature, Administration and Humanitarian Projects* (JAHF 2019), 263–266. <https://doi.org/10.2991/jahp-19.2019.57>
- Bogomolova, E. S., & Dovlatova, A. (2020). Cultural Heritage as a Tourist Resource for the Development of Cultural Tourism in Georgia. In *7th International Conference on Education, Language, Art and Inter-Cultural Communication (ICELAIC 2020)*, 507, 315–319. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.201215.352>
- Boksberger, P. E., & Laesser, C. (2009). Segmentation of the senior travel market by the means of travel motivations. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 15(4), 311–322.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Supporting a grounded theory with an audit trail: An illustration. *Methodology, International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 12(4), 305–316.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Bruwer, J., & Lesschaev, I. (2012). Wine tourists' destination region brand image perception and antecedents: Conceptualization of a winescape framework. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 29(7), 611–628.
- Bruwer, J., Prayag, G., & Disegna, M. (2018). Why wine tourists visit cellar doors: Segmenting motivation and destination image. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 20(3), 355–366. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2187>
- Burtscher, M., Federolf, P. A., Nachbauer, W., & Kopp, M. (2019). Potential health benefits from downhill skiing. *Frontiers in Physiology*, 10(JAN), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fphys.2018.01924>
- Campo, C. M., & De Guzman, R. B. (2024). Tourism Through Local Eyes: A Potential Assessment of Danawan Lake. *American Journal of Tourism and Hospitality*, 2(1), 52–55. <https://doi.org/10.54536/ajth.v2i1.2585>
- Carson, S., Hawkes, L., Gislason, K., & Cantrell, K. (2017). Literature, tourism and the city: writing and cultural change. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 15(4), 380–392. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2016.1165237>
- Castleberry, A., & Nolen, A. (2018). Thematic analysis of qualitative research data: Is it as easy as it sounds? *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, 10(6), 807–815.
- Chen, F., Liu, S. Q., & Mattila, A. S. (2020). Bragging and humblebragging in online reviews. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 80, 102849.
- Chen, H., & Rahman, I. (2018). Cultural tourism: An analysis of engagement, cultural contact, memorable tourism experience and destination loyalty. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 26, 153–163.
- Cheng, X., Fu, S., Sun, J., Bilgihan, A., & Okumus, F. (2019). An investigation on stickiness intention in sharing economy driven hospitality platforms. *Tourism Management*, 71, 366–377.
- Chockalingam, M., & Ganesh, A. A. (2010). Problems encountered by tourists. *Business and Economic Horizons*, 3(3), 68–72. <https://doi.org/10.15208/beh.2010.28>
- Chunhong, J. (2020). Review and Prospect of China's Ice-Snow Tourism Research in Recent 20 Years. *The Frontiers of Society, Science and ...*, 2(1), 41–52. <https://doi.org/10.25236/FSST.2020.020105>
- Ciangă, N., & Sorocovschi, V. (2017). the Impact of Tourism Activities. a Point of View. *Risks and Catastrophes Journal*, 20(1), 25–40. https://doi.org/10.24193/rcj2017_02
- Coetier, J. F. (2002). Lay people's evaluation of historic sites. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 59(2), 111–123.
- Cohen, E. (2000). *The commercialized crafts of Thailand: Hill tribes and lowland villages*. University of Hawaii Press.
- Cohen, E., & Cooper, R. L. (1986). Language and tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 13(4), 533–563.
- Connelly, L. M. (2016). Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Medsurg nursing*, 25(6), 435.
- den Breejen, L. (2007). The experiences of long distance walking: A case study of the West Highland Way in Scotland. *Tourism Management*, 28(6), 1417–1427.
- Dolezal, C. (2015). The tourism encounter in community-based tourism in Northern Thailand: Empty meeting ground or space for change? *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 8(2), 165–186. <https://doi.org/10.14764/10.ASEAS-2015.2-4>
- Elo, S., Kääriäinen, M., Kanste, O., Pölkki, T., Utriainen, K., & Kyngäs, H. (2014). Qualitative Content Analysis. *SAGE Open*, 4(1), 215824401452263. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014522633>
- Esin, C., Fathi, M., & Squire, C. (2014). Narrative analysis: The constructionist approach. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*, 203–216.
- Eusébio, C., & Vieira, A. L. (2013). Destination attributes' evaluation, satisfaction and behavioural intentions: A structural modelling approach. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 15(1), 66–80. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr>
- Fakari, R. D., Khristianto, W., Poernomo, D., & Suhartono. (2023). *Tourist Satisfaction: The Influence of Tourist Attractions, Tourist Facilities, and Social Media Marketing* (Vol. 1). Atlantis Press International BV. https://doi.org/10.2991/978-94-6463-290-3_12
- Ferm, L. E. C., & Thaichon, P. (2021). Value co-creation and social media: Investigating antecedents and influencing factors in the US retail banking industry. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 61, 102548.
- Filep, S., & Laing, J. (2019). Trends and Directions in Tourism and Positive Psychology. *Journal of Travel Research*, 58(3), 343–354. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287518759227>
- Fulmer, I. S., Barry, B., & Long, D. A. (2009). Lying and smiling: Informational and emotional deception in negotiation. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 88, 691–709.
- Gatti, E. T., Brownlee, M. T., & Bricker, K. S. (2022). Winter recreationists' perspectives on seasonal differences in the outdoor recreation setting. *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism*, 37, 100366.

- Ghvanidze, S., Bitsch, L., Elze, A., Hanf, J. H., & Kang, S. (2022). Why Travel to Georgia? Motivations, Experiences, and Country's Image Perceptions of Wine Tourists. *Tourism and Hospitality*, 3(4), 838–854. <https://doi.org/10.3390/tourhosp3040052>
- Glenn, K. (2001). The impacts of tourism (p. 19).
- Gogitidze, G., Nadareishvili, N., Harun, R., Arion, I. D., & Muresan, I. C. (2023). Exploring Residents' Perceptions towards Tourism Development—A Case Study of the Adjara Mountain Area. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 15(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15010492>
- Groen, M. (2012). Where do we go from here?: Visualising Amsterdam for tourists, based on geotagged user generated content.
- Guinn, R. (1980). Elderly recreational vehicle tourists: Motivations for leisure. *Journal of Travel Research*, 19(1), 9–12.
- Hall, J., O'Mahony, B., & Gayler, J. (2017). Modelling the relationship between attribute satisfaction, overall satisfaction, and behavioural intentions in Australian ski resorts. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 34(6), 764–778.
- He, X., & Luo, J. M. (2020). Relationship among Travel Motivation, Satisfaction and Revisit Intention of Skiers: A Case Study on the Tourists of Urumqi Silk Road Ski Resort. *Administrative Sciences*, 10(3), 1–13.
- Horneman, L., Carter, R. W., Wei, S., & Ruys, H. (2002). Profiling the senior traveler: An Australian perspective. *Journal of Travel Research*, 41(1), 23–37. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004728750204100104>
- Huang, L., & Tsai, H. T. (2003). The study of senior traveler behavior in Taiwan. *Tourism Management*, 24(5), 561–574. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177\(03\)00008-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(03)00008-6)
- Hugo, M. L. (1999). A comprehensive approach towards the planning, grading and auditing of hiking trails as ecotourism products. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 2(3), 138–173.
- Indira, R. (2020). Lending voices to the marginalised: The power of narratives as alternative sociological discourse. *Sociological Bulletin*, 69(1), 7–16.
- Islam, M. S. (2023). Experiences of smiles and eye contact at hotels: A video elicited focus group study. In CAUTHE 2023: West, East, South, North: Redirecting Research in Tourism, Hospitality and Events: *Proceedings of the 33rd Annual Conference: Proceedings of the 33rd Annual Conference*, 33–51.
- Jenkins, O. H. (1999). Understanding and Measuring Tourist Destination Images. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 1, 1–15.
- Jentoft, N., & Olsen, T. S. (2019). Against the flow in data collection: How data triangulation combined with a 'slow' interview technique enriches data. *Qualitative Social Work*, 18(2), 179–193. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325017712581>
- Jin, S., Yang, J., Wang, E., & Liu, J. (2020). The influence of high-speed rail on ice–snow tourism in northeastern China. *Tourism Management*, 78, 104070. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2019.104070>
- Jørgensen, M. T. (2020). The Attraction of the Mundane – How everyday life contributes to destination attractiveness in the Nordic region. *Tourist Studies*, 20(4), 467–484. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468797620955251>
- Ka-Kan-dee, M., & Nonthapot, S. (2020). Communication factors affecting the tourism services in the upper northeast of Thailand. *Management Science Letters*, 10(7), 1437–1444. <https://doi.org/10.5267/j.msl.2019.12.024>
- Kamenidou, I., & Stavrianea, A. (2022). Profiling Monastery Tourists based on Memorable Experiences, Place Identity, Satisfaction, Intention to Revisit and Intention to Recommend. *Review of Integrative Business and Economics Research*, 11(1), 86–110. https://doi.org/10.58745/riber_11-1_t21-036
- Khanum, F., Zia -ul- Islam, S., & Khan, M. A. (2020). Perceptual Study Regarding the Impact of Recreational Activities Upon Healthy Lifestyle of Youth. *Global Educational Studies Review*, V(II), 19–27. [https://doi.org/10.31703/gesr.2020\(v-ii\).03](https://doi.org/10.31703/gesr.2020(v-ii).03)
- Kirilenko, A. P., Stepchenkova, S. O., & Dai, X. (2021). Automated topic modeling of tourist reviews: Does the Anna Karenina principle apply? *Tourism Management*, 83, 104241.
- Korganashvili, L. (2017). *Religious Tourism in Georgia* (pp. 95–99). <https://doi.org/10.15308/sitcon-2017-95-99>
- Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice*, 24(1), 120–124. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092>
- Kotsi, F., Johnston, K., & Pike, S. (2023). Stopovers as valued-based experience: A conceptual model. *Annals of Tourism Research Empirical Insights*, 4(1), 100084. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annale.2022.100084>
- Kozak, M., & Rimmington, M. (1998). Benchmarking: Destination attractiveness and small hospitality business performance. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 10(5), 184–188. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09596119810227767>
- Kung, R.-H. (2018). A Study of the Tourists Expectation, Satisfaction and Revisiting Intention in the Neivan, Hsinchu. *International Journal of New Developments in Engineering and Society*, 2(1), 43–49.
- Lai, S., Zhang, S., Zhang, L., Tseng, H. W., & Shiau, Y. C. (2021). Study on the influence of cultural contact and tourism memory on the intention to revisit: A case study of cultural and creative districts. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 13(4), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13042416>
- Lamara, K., & Maka, P. (2019). Georgian gastronomic diversity to promote cultural heritage and sustainable development of tourism in the country. *European Science Review*, 21–25.
- Lazareva, M. (2015). The Hellenistic features of Armenian art in VI B.C. - III A.D. Athens: ATINER'S Conference

- Paper Series*, No: HUM2015-1415. Athens, 1–17.
- Lewis, J. (2009). Redefining Qualitative Methods: Believability in the Fifth Moment. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(2), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800201>
- Li, G., R., L., Vu, H. Q., & Rong, J. (2013). Discovering the hotel selection preferences of Hong Kong inbound travelers using the Choquet Integral. *Tourism Management*, 36, 321-330.
- Liu, M., Zhao, L., & Liu, K. (2018). *Study on Ice and Snow Tourism Development Strategies in Changbai Mountain Nature Reserve*. 233(Iccesh), 1237–1241. <https://doi.org/10.2991/iccsh-18.2018.274>
- Lockyer, T. (2005). Understanding the dynamics of the hotel accommodation purchase decision. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 17(6), 481–492.
- Long, B., Yusof, N. S., Azmy, M. M., & Qin, X. (2023). The Success of a Food Tourism Destination: A Systematic Review. *International Journal of Professional Business Review*, 8(10), 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2023.v8i10.3761>
- Lundmark, L., & Carson, D. A. (2020). Who travels to the North? Challenges and opportunities for tourism. *Dipping in to the North: Living, Working and Traveling in Sparsely Populated Areas*, 265–284.
- Maleerat, K.-K.-D., & Nonthapot, S. (2020). Language Communication Barriers among Tourism Services Personnel in the Upper Northeast. *International Journal of Management (IJM)*, 11(9), 613–622. <https://doi.org/10.34218/IJM.11.9.2020.057>
- Mansouri, M., & Ujang, N. (2016). Tourist' expectation and satisfaction towards pedestrian networks in the historical district of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. *Asian Geographer*, 33(1), 35–55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10225706.2016.1185639>
- Masiero, L., Qiu, R. T. R., & Zoltan, J. (2020). Long-Haul Tourist Preferences for Stopover Destination Visits. *Journal of Travel Research*, 59(5), 811–827. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287519867143>
- Mauri, C., & Turci, L. (2018). From ski to snow: Rethinking package holidays in a winter mountain destination. *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, 10(2), 201–210.
- McGovern, P., Jalabadze, M., Batiuk, S., Callahan, M. P., Smith, K. E., Hall, G. R., & Lordkipanidze, D. (2017). Early Neolithic wine of Georgia in the South Caucasus. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 114(48), E10309–E10318. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1714728114>
- McKercher, B. (2002). Towards a classification of cultural tourists. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 4(1), 29–38. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.346>
- McKercher, B., Prideaux, B., & Thompson, M. (2023). The relationship between accommodation type and tourists' in-destination behaviour. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 0(0), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2023.2221070>
- Meladze, M. (2015). The importance of the role of local food in Georgian tourism. *European Scientific Journal*, 2, 222–227. <https://doi.org/10.14455/ISEC.res.2017.212>
- Meladze, M. (2016). Wine Tourism as a Great Opportunity for Georgia. *European Scientific Journal*, 7881(December), 1857–7881.
- Mertova, P., & Webster, L. (2007). Using Narrative Inquiry as a Research Method. In *Using Narrative Inquiry as a Research Method*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429424533>
- Morse. (2015). “Data Were Saturated . . .” *Qualitative Health Research*, 25(5), 587–588. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732315576699>
- Movahed, A., & Ghalehtemouri, K. J. (2020). An Empirical Investigation on Tourism Attractive Destinations and Spatial Behavioral Tourist Pattern Analysis in Tehran. *Asian Journal of Geographical Research*, January, 18–27. <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajgr/2020/v3i130097>
- Musa, G., & Sim, O. F. (2010). Travel behaviour: a study of older Malaysians. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 13(2), 177–192.
- Namchavadze, B. (2020). *Georgia's Agriculture Sector Key Trends for 2012-2019*.
- Niculescu, A., & Busuioc, M. F. (2021). Development trends of mountain tourism and winter sports market, worldwide, in Europe and in Romania. *Romanian Economic and Business Review*, 16(2), 138–144.
- Nomnian, S., & Jhaiyanuntana, A. (2020). Intercultural Communication Challenges and Strategies for the Thai Undergraduate Hotel Interns. *Pasaa*, 59(1), 204–235.
- Nomnian, S., Trupp, A., Niyomthong, W., Tangcharoensathaporn, P., & Charoenkongka, A. (2020). Language and community-based tourism: Use, needs, dependency, and limitations. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 13(1), 57–79. <https://doi.org/10.14764/10.ASEAS-0029>
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- Nutsugbodo, R. Y., Kwofie, C., Baah, N. G., Yormekpe, D. D., & Armah, L. K. (2022). Choosing between alternative accommodation, using a discrete choice experiment. *Anatolia*, 33(1), 15–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2021.1900883>
- Obradović, S. (2024). Sacred Journeys: Exploring Emotional Experiences and Place Attachment in Religious Tourism at Monasteries in Serbia. *Religions*, 15(6), 654. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15060654>
- Olivar, K. G., Pamolarcon, K. J. L., Portillano, E. O., & Untang, D. F. (2024). Characterizing Inbound Tourism in Mati City: Destination Attributes and Revisit Intention. *American Journal of Tourism and Hospitality*, 2(1), 46–51. <https://doi.org/10.54536/ajth.v2i1.2523>
- Pereira, V., Gupta, J. J., & Hussain, S. (2022). Impact of Travel Motivation on Tourist's Attitude Toward Destination: Evidence of Mediating Effect of Destination Image. *Journal of Hospitality and*

- Tourism Research*, 46(5), 946–971. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348019887528>
- Pijls, R., Groen, B. H., Galetzka, M., & Pruyn, A. T. H. (2017). Measuring the experience of hospitality: Scale development and validation. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 67, 125–133. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2017.07.008>
- Pike, S., Kotsi, F., & Tossan, V. (2018). Stopover destination image: A comparison of salient attributes elicited from French and Australian travellers. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 9, 160–165.
- Radojevic, T., Stanistic, N., Stanic, N., & Davidson, R. (2018). The effects of traveling for business on customer satisfaction with hotel services. *Tourism Management*, 67, 326–341.
- Ragavan, N. A., Subramonian, H., & Sharif, S. P. (2014). Tourists' Perceptions of Destination Travel Attributes: An Application to International Tourists to Kuala Lumpur. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 144, 403–411. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.07.309>
- Rajprasit, K., Pratoomrat, P., & Wang, T. (2015). Perceptions and problems of english language and communication abilities: A final check on Thai engineering undergraduates. *English Language Teaching*, 8(3), 111–120. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v8n3p111>
- Ramirez, R. R., & Fernández, M. P. (2018). Religious experiences of travellers visiting the Royal Monastery of Santa María de Guadalupe (Spain). *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 10(6). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10061890>
- Regidor, S. C. G., Arroyo, R. A., Aclan, Q. A. J. E., & Azuelo, A. P. L. (2022). Preference and Constraints on Outdoor Recreational Activities: Insights from Hospitality Management Students. *International Journal of Academic and Industry Research*, 3(4), 145–164. <https://doi.org/10.53378/352945>
- Sætórðsdóttir, A. D., Hall, C. M., & Stefánsson, T. (2019). Senses by seasons: Tourists' perceptions depending on seasonality in popular nature destinations in Iceland. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 11(11), 3059. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11113059>
- Said, J., & Maryono, M. (2018). Motivation and Perception of Tourists as Push and Pull Factors to Visit National Park. *E3S Web of Conferences*, 31, 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/20183108022>
- Sanasaryan, A., & Viñals, M. J. (2020). Diagnosis of tourism enhancement of the unesco world heritage ensemble of apostolic churches of Armenia. *International Archives of the Photogrammetry, Remote Sensing and Spatial Information Sciences - ISPRS Archives*, 54(1), 551–557. <https://doi.org/10.5194/isprs-archives-XLIV-M-1-2020-551-2020>
- Sangpikul, A. (2008). Travel motivations of Japanese senior travellers to Thailand. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 10(1), 81–94.
- Sarial-Abi, G., Merdin-Uygur, E., & Gürhan-Canli, Z. (2020). Responses to replica (vs. genuine) touristic experiences. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 83. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2020.102927>
- Sekhniashvili, G. (2020). Wine tourism destination competitiveness: The case of Georgia. *Ecocycles*, 6(1), 39–51. <https://doi.org/10.19040/ecocycles.v6i1.162>
- Shehu, H., & Shittu, K. O. (2015). The Bridge to Economic Prosperity: The Role of English Language Communication in Entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 5(7), 189–195.
- Söderlind, U. (2014a). Fast food in Tbilisi. *Review of Applied Socio-Economic Research*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315007748-15>
- Söderlind, U. (2014b). The Georgian Cuisine According to Some National and International Cookbooks. *Review of Applied Socio-Economic Research*, 8(2), 180–194.
- Steiger, R., Damm, A., Pretenthaler, F., & Pröbstl-Haider, U. (2021). Climate change and winter outdoor activities in Austria. *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism*, 34(September 2020). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jort.2020.100330>
- Su, L., Tang, B., & Nawijn, J. (2021). How tourism activity shapes travel experience sharing: Tourist well-being and social context. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 91, 103316. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2021.103316>
- Suanmali, S. (2014). Factors Affecting Tourist Satisfaction: An Empirical Study in the Northern Part of Thailand. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 12, 01027. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20141201027>
- Sun, K., Tian, X., Xia, J., Ou, M., & Tang, C. (2023). The Market Responses of Ice and Snow Destinations to Southerners' Tourism Willingness: A Case Study from China. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 15(18), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151813759>
- Swarbrooke, J. S. (2007). *Tourism: A Modern Synthesis* (pp. 812–813).
- Tantawy, D., & Essam, N. (2021). Cultural Buildings' Design between Visual Creativity and Psychological Impact: An approach for activating the concept of uncanny architecture in expressing national issues. *The 5th International Conference of AACLA "Civilization between the Cultural Heritage and the Modern Techniques (Tunisia-Morocco)*, 6(26), 79–101. <https://doi.org/10.21608/mjaf.2020.23673.1506>
- Thurlow, C., Jaworski, A., & Ylänné, V. (2010). *Tourism discourse: Language and global mobility*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tovmasyan, G., & Johann, M. (2018). *Armenia as a Tourism Destination for Polish Tourists* (pp. 111–120).
- Tsitsino, D., Rusudan, M., & Akaki, K. (2019). European Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies Imereti Region's Natural-Recreational and Historical-Cultural Potential as Tourism Development Factor in Georgia. *European Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 5(1), 30–38.
- Udoh, I. S. (2019). Hospitality of the People at the Tourism Destination and Destination Attractiveness of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Research in Tourism and Hospitality (IJRTH)*, 5(2), 1–7.

- UNWTO. (2011). *Study on tourism and intangible cultural heritage*.
- Ursache, M. (2015). Tourism – Significant Driver Shaping a Destinations Heritage. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 188, 130–137. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.03.348>
- van Tongeren, L. (2014). Religion and tourism intertwined. Visiting abbeys as a tourist experience. Exploring the applicability of a model. *Yearbook for Ritual and Liturgical Studies*, 30, 51–71.
- Vigolo, V. (2017). Older tourists’ travel planning behavior. *Older Tourist Behavior and Marketing Tools*, 63–84.
- Vigolo, V., Simeoni, F., Cassia, F., & Ugolini, M. (2017). Older Tourists’ Travel Motivations and Overall Satisfaction At The Destination: The Case Of Sirmione. *20th Excellence in Services International Conference*, 817–824.
- Volkov, A. D., & Tishkov, S. V. (2022). Strategic Development Priorities for the Karelian Arctic Region in the Context of the Russian Arctic Zone Economic Space Integration. *Arctic and North*, 46, 5–32. <https://doi.org/10.37482/issn2221-2698.2022.46.5>
- Ward, A. (2014). Segmenting the senior tourism market in Ireland based on travel motivations. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 20(3), 267–277.
- Wong, J. W. C., Lai, I. K. W., & Tao, Z. (2020). Sharing memorable tourism experiences on mobile social media and how it influences further travel decisions. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 23(14), 1773–1787.
- Wu, C. W. (2015). Foreign tourists’ intentions in visiting leisure farms. *Journal of Business Research*, 68(4), 757–762.
- Wullur, M., & Samehe, V. (2020). Importance Performance Analysis using Dematel: A Case Study on Tourist Destination Attributes in Manado Indonesia. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 76, 01024. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20207601024>
- Xu, W., & Zhang, X. (2021). Online expression as Well-being (com) ing: A study of travel blogs on Nepal by Chinese female tourists. *Tourism Management*, 83, 104224.
- Yang, J., Wang, Y., Tang, F., Guo, X., Chen, H., & Ding, G. (2023). Ice-and-snow tourism in China: trends and influencing factors. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-02288-4>
- Yavas, U., & Babakus, E. (2005). Dimensions of hotel choice criteria: congruence between business and leisure travelers. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 24(3), 359–367.
- Yoon, Y., & Uysal, M. (2005). An examination of the effects of motivation and satisfaction on destination loyalty : a structural model. *Tourism Management*, 26, 45–56. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2003.08.016>
- You, X., & O’Leary, J. T. (1999). Destination behaviour of older UK travellers. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 24(1), 23–34.
- Younas, A., Fàbregues, S., Durante, A., Escalante, E. L., Inayat, S., & Ali, P. (2023). Proposing the “MIRACLE” Narrative Framework for Providing Thick Description in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 22, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221147162>
- Yousaf, A., Amin, I., & Jose Antonio, C. (2018). Tourists’ motivations to travel: A theoretical perspective on the existing literature. *Tourism and Hospitality Management*, 24(1), 197–211. <https://doi.org/10.20867/thm.24.1.8>
- Yousaf, S., & Xiucheng, F. (2018). Halal culinary and tourism marketing strategies on government websites: A preliminary analysis. *Tourism Management*, 68(71750110538), 423–443. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.04.006>
- Zainol, R. (2014). Appreciating a World Heritage Site using Multisensory Elements: A Case Study in Kinabalu Park, Sabah, Malaysia. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 12, 01080. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20141201080>