

## CURRENT SITUATION AND PROSPECTS OF GUESTHOUSE BUSINESS IN BATUMI (GEORGIA)

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**Abstract.** A tourism has been a priority field of Georgian economy for many years. Government has conducted many activities for its stimulation. Georgia is one of the best destinations for tourism and it has many offers for visitors, including adorable nature, diverse landscapes, ridge of Caucasus, subtropical zone of Black Sea, rivers, waterfalls, cities carved in rocks, resorts, mineral waters, historical monuments, cities, settlements. In addition, traditional Georgian hospitality and famous Georgian cuisine transforms this country to a touristic one.<sup>12</sup>

**Keywords:** Tourism, guesthouses, research, reality, prospect.

**Introduction.** An importance of guesthouses in the modern tourism has grown significantly in recent years. For foreign visitors such hotels are often more attractive and demanded than so-called “high class” hotels. Georgia, as the developing country, tries not to lag behind the modernity and satisfy demands of the world tourism. We have quite big selection of guesthouses, but only few of them satisfy the demands of tourists. In the recent period field of services has been developed and number of guesthouses (as well as accompanying problems) has significantly grown.

**Scientific Aim.** Therefore, we decided to study how developed is this business in Georgia, particularly in Batumi and reveal a complete picture in this field. What are the problems that foreign and Georgian tourists face, when they interact with hotels and what are the ways for solution of these problems? Does the state need to conduct certain activities for support of this business?

Batumi is Georgian tourism center and so we decided to participate in a study of this city. Here a summer season is the most popular and number of tourists reaches its peak on this season. Today center of Batumi is similar to western European cities with its decorated streets, fountains and noisy shops. In the nights the city is richly illuminated and the lights of coastal area are also dazzling. Batumi’s population is hospitable and friendly. Everyone is ready to help. Locals call Batumi “city of love” and there many monuments about this topic in a promenade.<sup>3</sup>

There are many brand hotels in Batumi and majority of them is almost full all the time. Local hotels do not lag behind and host Georgian or foreign tourists during the summer. We were quite interested to understand, whether family business is developed or not in tourism zone and if there is demand from tourists. Also we wanted to reveal who were the main consumers of this business and did it have perspective of development. Eventually we selected this resort for observation and stayed there for certain period of time.

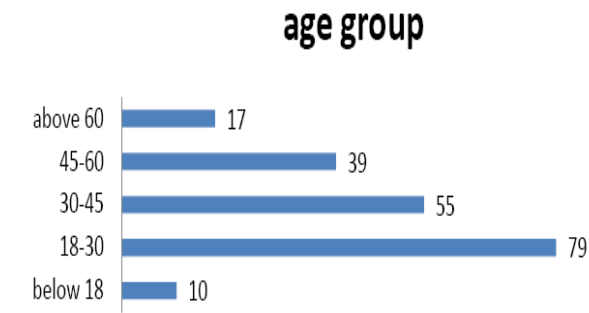
**Results.** We interviewed 200 visitors in Batumi, including Georgians and foreigners on the basis of selection. For this purpose we prepared Georgian and English questionnaire, because we wanted to understand opinions of not only Georgian, but also foreign visitors. As regards to the age groups, 10 persons were from the age group below 18, 79 – from the age group 18-30, 55 – from the age group 30-45, 39 – from the age group 45-60 and 17 – from the age group above 60.

Employment statuses were the following: 70 – employed, 7 – self-employed/owner of a business, 46 – unemployed, 61 – student, 16 – pensioner.

<sup>1</sup> <http://forbes.ge/blog/137/Sida-turizmi-saqarTveloSi>

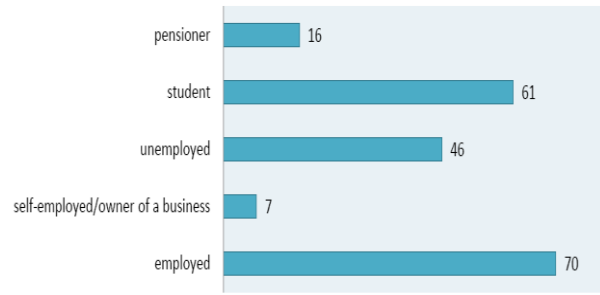
<sup>2</sup> <https://pirveli4ever.wordpress.com/2010/06/23/%E1%83%A2%E1%83%A3%E1%83%A0%E1%83%98%E1%83%96%E1%83%9B%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%92%E1%83%90%E1%83%9C%E1%83%95%E1%83%98%E1%83%97%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%94%E1%83%91%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%9E%E1%83%94/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://mardihouse.ge/batumi>



source: research done by the author

Fig. 1. Age group



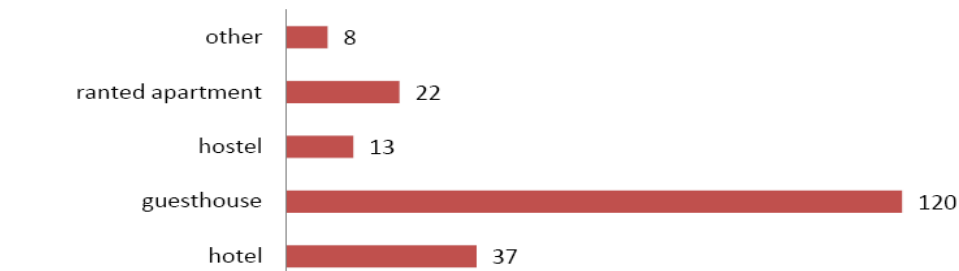
source: research done by the author

Fig. 2. Employment statuses

Majority of respondents answered that they were not in Batumi for the first time and systematically rested here for many years. We got the similar answer not only from Georgian visitors, but some foreigners also said that they were here for the second time. Majority of Georgian respondents answered that they were planning to stay here for 5-10 or 10-15 days. Number of days is not surprising, because they basically visited Batumi with family members. However, majority of tourists planned to stay in Batumi for 2-5 or 5-10 days.

To our question what kind of place were they staying, the answers were the following: 37 – hotel; 120 – guesthouse; 13 – hostel; 22 – rented apartment; 8 – other (please, concretize) (for example, stayed at friend’s apartment).

**staying place**



source: research done by the author

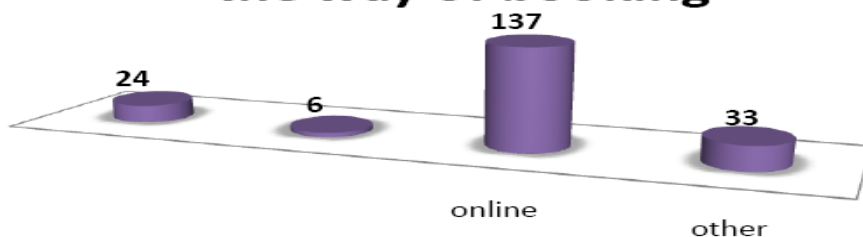
Fig. 3. Staying place

To our question, if they were looking for other type of places and if they did, what was the acceptable price range, majority of them answered that it was 20-80 Georgian Lari. However, it should be noted that not a single foreigner answered positively to this question. In our opinion, the reason for this is small number of days they were planning to stay in Batumi.

To our question, how did they estimate the different components of service with 5-score range, where “1” meant “very dissatisfied and “5” meant “very satisfied”, the answers were the following: the service averagely got 4.1 score, prices – 3.26, selection and quality of dishes – 1.62 (these two components are considered together, because only 1 out of 10 guesthouses had this service), cleanliness – 4.12, furniture and equipment – 2.61, location – 4.32, knowledge of necessary languages – 3.51, security – 3.11.

To our question, how did they book the location, the answers of respondents were the following: by means of Georgian tourist agency – 24; by means of foreign tourist agency – 6; online – 137; other (please, concretize) – 33. The last option basically means that respondents already had information about a contact person, contacted him/her and booked location.

**the way of booking**



source: research done by the author

Fig. 4. The way of booking

To our question, how easy or hard it was to find and book location in Batumi on the basis of 5-score range, where “1” meant “very hard” and “5” meant “very easy”, almost none of tourists answered 4 or 5. 65 % of tourists answered 3, 25 % - 2 and 10 % - 1. It means that for tourists, selection and booking of apartments in Batumi is quite hard.

To our question, how acceptable is number of guesthouses in Batumi, 82 % answered that it was totally acceptable, but remaining 18 % answered that it was less acceptable. 93 % of respondents answered that it was quite easy to get anywhere from their guesthouses, 7 % answered that it was not easy and for 0 % it was very hard.

To our question, where should be guesthouse located, in the center of the city or far from it, 16 % answered that he/she wanted to live far from the city, but remaining 84 % preferred living in the center.

To our question, what was the approximate daily expense during staying in Batumi, the answers were the following:

- 4 % - 0-30;
- 42 % - 30-60;
- 14 % - 60-90;
- 40 % - above 90.

To our question, what kind of service did Batumi lack, the answers of 200 tourists were the following: 11 % - cafes/bars/restaurants; 12 % - tourism information center; 8 % - shop of local production; 14 % - foods; 12 % - bookshop; 9 % - swimming pool; 21 % - shop of souvenirs; 29 % - cultural and ethnic events; 25 % - attractions/parks for children.

To our question, what did they like or dislike especially at their living places, majority answered that they liked everything or were satisfied; and only few of respondents answered that they did not like the place, where they stayed.

**Conclusions.** As the answers of respondents and their analysis show, Batumi and there located hotels basically preserve international standards. Therefore, number of tourists in Batumi increases every year. According to data of 10 months of 2016, number of tourists in Adjara has grown by 4.7 %, particularly number of foreign tourists has grown by 19.5 %.<sup>1</sup> Of course, this fact is pleasing for us, Georgian citizens, because development of tourism significantly supports multi-faceted development of our country. However, it is obvious that Batumi and corresponding guesthouses have many shortcomings and problems that require solution and effort of owners, as well as state. As the answers of respondents show, the basic problems are related to facilities. For instance, the respondents need more tourist information centers, souvenir shops, swimming pools, parks, attractions for children and so on. In addition, they think that personnel needs retraining and learning programs, because often they do not know foreign languages and have barriers in communication with clients. It is also desirable that more guesthouses offer food services, because as the tourists note, eating at guesthouses is more acceptable and easier for them. In addition, the respondents think that it is necessary to decrease prices, because frequently production, services and corresponding prices are incompatible. If we solve above-mentioned problems and utilize potential of development, Batumi will become more famous tourist city in the whole world.

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