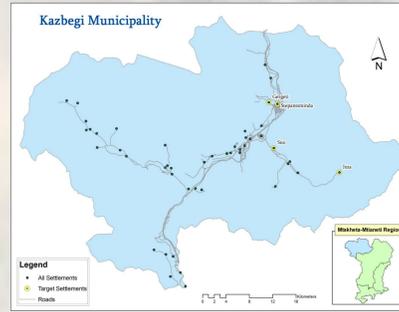


MAXQDA and MAXApp in the Field of Data Collection and Analysis in Tourism Study (Example of Kazbegi Municipality)

The research project “AMIES II – Scenario development for sustainable land use in the Greater Caucasus, Georgia” is about land use, land development and quality of life in the greater Caucasus, Georgia. The study area is one of the most visited summer resort Kazbegi Municipality, which attracts many tourists because of its climate and natural beauty. The project is divided in four units with German and Georgian researchers cooperating in each unit. The research is supported by the University of Giessen with cooperation to Tbilisi State University



Research area: Kazbegi Municipality
Region: Mtskheta-Mtianeti (north-eastern Georgia)
Population (2002): 1820
Distance from Tbilisi: 157 km
Sea level: 1,740 meters
Coordinates: 42°39'27"N 44°38'43"E

Mountain Tourism in Georgia

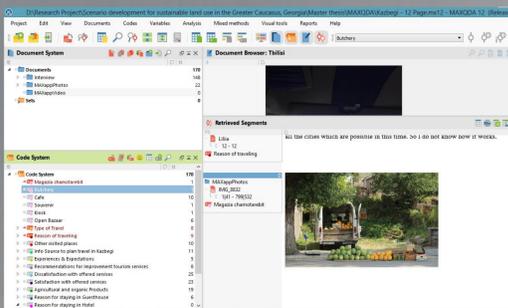
Tourism is amongst the fastest growing sectors in Georgia. It is remarkable that an average annual growth rate for the last 10 years (2005-2014) was 30%, with the highest growth rate seen in 2012, when the number of international arrivals increased by 56.9%. The obvious benefits of tourism sector cannot be denied in the Georgian economy. Mountain adventure tourism has an important business character. It is seen as a major tool of regional economic growth and a way of rural and mountain regions development as well. The changes are also significant in mountainous Georgia and have a substantial potential for further development. Nonetheless tourism is seen as an engine of income and source of employment. It brings the most important economic benefits for host community.



Research Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to analyze Tourism in Kazbegi Municipality: Socio-economic aspects (peculiarities) of resource provision and service delivery as well as socio-cultural aspects of tourism in Kazbegi. In the research great attention is paid to evaluate tourists' expectations and satisfaction with regard to food supply and tourism services in hotels and hotel-type establishments (Guesthouses). Understanding the expectations and experiences of visitors will give important clues in developing destination attractiveness, improving tourist goods and tourism business in Kazbegi. Therefore, the improved tourism services will have a great impact of the percentage of visitors. Every satisfied tourist will have intention to revisit and willingness to recommend Kazbegi to others. The fact of creating loyal tourists is important to receive new visitors and make the place more attractive and advisable. This study can be considered as a useful information and guidance for tourism related decisions (government officials, academicians and tourism professionals).

Cultural Intimacy



It is notable that during the first fieldwork (2014) research limitations were identified in the process of analyzing collected data and information. The main challenge was to solve problem of “Cultural Intimacy”. In 1997 the concept of cultural intimacy has entered the anthropological lexicon by Michael Herzfeld. “The recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality...“Cultural Intimacy” includes set of values, which in most cases are not typical for each country and nation (Herzfeld, 1997). In the following research we faced the problem to explain the meanings of local terms without losing their unique and cultural value. Due to the fact that our study reflects many typical things of Georgian culture and traditions, we had to find a way by which we could make some local terms clear for foreigners. Therefore the only way to solve above-mentioned challenges was – visualization.



MAXQDA & MAXApp

During the second fieldwork (2015) we used MAXApp to collect daily life images and videos of local dwellers, existing stores, kiosks, food joints, guesthouses, hotels, farms, ect. Photo-visualization was the method we used to present incomprehensible terms for foreigners. Such as: “Open Bazaar” and “Mobile Shop”. Open bazaars in Kazbegi Municipality are of special type. Basically it is presented by one or two sellers (street vendors) trading in an open space. ‘Mobile shop’ is a vehicle, which moves from village to village or from city to city and sells products. With the help of MAXApp we tagged the collected data by using “emoticon” icons with different emoticons for non-verbal categorization to save time during the coding process.

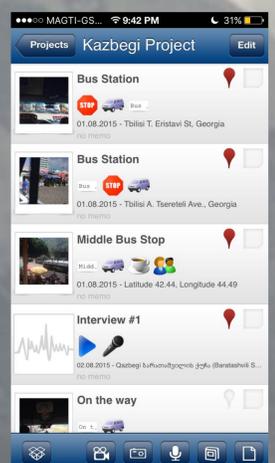
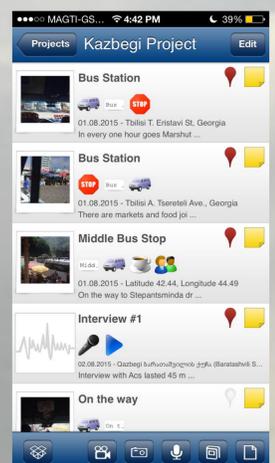
It should be emphasized that each data was automatically tagged with location at which they were created. At the same time we had the possibility to write notes, add memos to the collected data. It is very helpful because sometimes reflective information, such as thoughts, ideas, questions and concerns as you are conducting the participant observation, make majority of work. We used all advantages of participant observation with help of MAXApp to overcome above-mentioned limitation and fulfill the fieldwork.

In order to collect primary data In-depth Interviewing was used as a method of qualitative research technique with tourists who have been travelling in Kazbegi Municipality and stayed in hotel or hotel-type establishments (Guesthouse). The selection of respondents was done by using of purposive sampling, taking into consideration traits/characteristics of respondents. Such as gender, citizenship, budget level.

With help of purposive sampling we collected information from tourists with different characteristics and perspective. Tourist's highlighted following subjects during In-depth interviews: Travelling strategy during the trip, expectations and experiences about Kazbegi, tourists' needs and attitudes with regard to food supply (local agricultural and organic products), satisfaction/dissatisfaction with hotels and hotel type establishments (Guesthouse), and other type of tourism services.

In the research project is used the professional software program MAXQDA. It allows researchers to make text and multimedia analysis. Namely, it is able to import data from interviews, focus groups, photos, video files and also, to mark important information in the collected data with different codes by using regular codes, colors, symbols, or emoticons. The existed code system can be expanded or refined just like the research. Therefore it is helpful to manage the whole research (MAXQDA, 2015).

The method of data analysis applied for this study has been chosen according to the research purpose as well as taken various type of information into consideration. Qualitative content analysis implemented with help of Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDA) namely, MAXQDA. In our case inductive approach was taken, the conceptual framework has developed after empirical data were analyzed (Brotherton, 2008). Initially, we began coding process with thematic categories based on in-depth interview narratives and other type of information (Photos, Videos, Notes). After formulating a criteria we coded the entire information in MAXQDA. When analysing coded information the results showed us that we overcome above-mentioned limitation. It is worth to mention that categories or sub-categories which contains coded information of photos and text documents.



Research Findings

The number of hotels and guesthouses (hotel-type establishments), was ten in 2013, in Kazbegi. It should be noted that part of the guesthouses are not officially registered and, therefore exact data is not shown in the database of the National Statistics Office. That is why it is impossible to accurately estimate the number of existing accommodation units.

In Kazbegi there is wide selection of food joints. Most of them are concentrated in the center of Stepantsminda. Tourists have a wide choice where to go. Kiosks are presented as fast food joints, wine, food and agricultural products stores. In the other types of tourist services we want to separate adventure and shock (extreme) tourism. In Kazbegi there is not a wide choice of travel companies which provide necessary services to satisfy travelers' needs.

It was seen that the visitors had lower expectations, but left Kazbegi with high satisfaction levels for price, infrastructure, quality of services in hotels and hotel-type establishments (Guesthouse), a wide range of cafes and restaurants and personal safety.

The research revealed that in spite of high expectations of Georgian cuisine the satisfaction levels were too low. It should be noted that the majority of sampled tourists expressed their satisfaction with regard to staff, offered food and high-quality of services in hotels.

In fact, for above-mentioned tourism destination, improving English language skills, developing information sources about Kazbegi, increasing interaction between tourists and local population, improving food supply with regard to local traditional cuisine, train the employees of cafes and restaurants to have a friendly, polite and helpful staff and improve time management problem is important.

There is still much to learn about the gap between expectations and experiences in Kazbegi. But the results of this research can be considered as a useful guidance for governmental officials, academicians and tourism professionals.

