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TRENDS IN THE GROWTH OF DEMAND FOR MARINE TOURISM IN GEORGIA

Abstract. Nowadays, tourism is a principal factor in the successful development of the country's national economy and business.

Indeed, marine tourism is not yet a priority among the types of tourism, and its percentage share is still low in the structure of tourism, however, its growing demand allows for optimal forecasting. Therefore, identifying opportunities for the development of marine tourism, characterizing the mood of the population, analyzing the factors affecting the development of marine tourism, etc. is relevant, and its research is objectively necessary.

The main goal of the study was to determine expectations for the development of cruise tourism in Georgia. Statistical observation, grouping and analysis methods were used in the research process.

It should be noted that cruise tourism is quite a big business. So big that according to a report by the International Association of Cruise Lines, the fastest growth rates in demand for cruise tours have been recorded since 2010. The secret of the attractiveness of cruise tours is the fact that tourists are satisfied with the structure of the services received during the tours, with a wide opportunity for self-realization for recreation, offering the best and most comprehensive environment for travel lover

In the research process, general, as well as specific statistical methods were used.

It should be noted that before the pandemic, the number of international visitors arriving in Georgia by sea transport was characterized by an increasing trend since 2015; In 2022, a 50% reduction compared to 2015 was recorded; The statistical characteristics of marine tourism were the highest in the year of the beginning of the pandemic, which significantly decreased in 2021-2022. 60% of the 350 respondents participating in the study were in the age group of 25-44 years. 71% of the respondents are employed. 68% of respondents prefer internal closed cabins; For example, the Genoa-Laspezia-Civitavecchia (Rome) - Palma de Mallorca-Barcelona-Cannes-Genoa, cruise proved to be in demand among the residents of Georgia. In the structure of tourist expenses, the expenditure on non-alcoholic drinks prevails. etc.

Keywords: marine tourism, analysis, research, increase, trend.

JEL classification: CO

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საზღვაო ტურიზმზე მოთხოვნის ზრდის ტენდენციები საქართველოში

აბსტრაქტი. დღესდღეობით, ტურიზმი ქვეყნის ეროვნული ეკონომიკისა და ბიზნესის წარმატებული განვითარების ერთ-ერთი ძირითადი ფაქტორია. მართლაც, საზღვაო ტურიზმი ჯერ კიდევ არ არის პრიორიტეტული ტურიზმის სახეობებს შორის და მისი პროცენტული წილი ჯერ კიდევ დაბალია ტურიზმის სტრუქტურაში, თუმცა მასზე მზარდი მოთხოვნა ოპტიმალური პროგნოზირების საშუალებას იძლევა. ამიტომ, აქტუალურია საზღვაო ტურიზმის განვითარების შესაძლებლობების გამოვლენა, მოსახლეობის განწყობის დახასიათება, საზღვაო ტურიზმის განვითარებაზე მომქმედებელი ფაქტორების ანალიზი და ა.შ.

კვლევის მთავარი მიზანი იყო საქართველოში საზღვაო, საკრუიზო ტურიზმის განვითარების მოლოდინების დადგენა. კვლევის პროცესში გამოყენებული იყო სტატისტიკური დაკვირვების, დაჯგუფებისა და ანალიზის მეთოდები.

აღსანიშნავია, რომ, საკრუიზო ტურიზმი საკმაოდ კარგი ბიზნესია. იმდენად დიდი, რომ Cruise Lines საერთაშორისო ასოციაციის ანგარიშის თანახმად, 2010 წლიდან ფიქსირდება საკრუიზო ტურებზე მოთხოვნის სწრაფი ზრდის ტემპები. საკრუიზო ტურების მიმზიდველობის საიდუმლო მდგომარეობს იმაში, რომ ტურისტები კმაყოფილნი არიან ტურ-პროდუქტების ხარისხით, ტურების დროს მიღებული სერვისებით, დასვენების და

თვითრეალიზაციის ფართო შესაძლებლობით, მოგზაურობის მოყვარულთათვის საუკეთესო და ყველაზე სრულყოფილი გარემოს შეთავაზებით და ა.შ.

აღსანიშნავია, რომ პანდემიამდე საქართველოში საზღვაო ტრანსპორტით ჩამოსული საერთაშორისო ვიზიტორების რაოდენობა 2015 წლიდან მზარდი ტენდენციით ხასიათდებოდა.

თუმცა პანდემიის შემდეგ, 2022 წელს 2015 წელთან შედარებით 50%-იანი შემცირება დაფიქსირდა. საზღვაო ტურიზმის სტატისტიკური მახასიათებლები ყველაზე მაღალი იყო პანდემიის დაწყების წელს, რომელიც მნიშვნელოვნად შემცირდა 2021-2022 წლებში.

საკრუიზო ტურებზე მოთხოვნის მოლოდინების განსაზღვრისათვის ჩავატარეთ მოსახლეობის კვლევა. კვლევაში მონაწილე 350 რესპონდენტიდან 60% იყო 25-44 წლის ასაკობრივი ჯგუფის. გამოკითხულთა 71% იყო დასაქმებული, 68% უპირატესობას ანიჭებდა შიდა დახურულ კაბინებს, დანარჩენი აივნიან და ფანჯრიანს, საქართველოს მოსახლეობაში მოთხოვნადი აღმოჩნდა მაგალითად, გენუა-ლასპეზია-ჩივიტავეკია (რომი) - პალმა დე მალიორკა-ბარსელონა-კანი-გენუა კრუიზი. ტურისტული ხარჯების სტრუქტურაში სჭარბობს ხარჯი უალკოჰოლო სასმელებზე. და ა.შ.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: საზღვაო ტურიზმი, ანალიზი, კვლევა, ზრდა, ტენდენცია.

JEL კლასიფიკაცია: CO

Introduction and review of literature

The tourism industry in Georgia is one of the leading sectors of the country's economy. (Khelashvili, 2020) The revival and development of tourism in Georgia are going on quite intensively. There is a marked growth trend in both international tourism and domestic tourism. Georgia is attractive mainly to neighbouring countries, which is why the priority is land and then air transport. Quantitative analysis of the field of tourism without a complete database is unthinkable. Therefore, taking into account the recommendations of the World Tourism Organization, the United Nations Statistical Commission and Eurostat, the National Statistical Service of Georgia is systematically improving the methodology of calculating tourism statistics indicators. The formation of the information base on international tourism started just a few years ago. The number of years to detect a trend is indeed small, but certain trends are still evident. A portal located on the website of the National Statistics Service provides a quick opportunity to find information, which combines the results of the survey of visitors and hotels in one space, which emphasizes the priority and attractiveness of different types and types of tourism in the country.

Tourism is the principal factor in the successful development of the country's national economy and business, therefore, the interest in tourism and its scientific research has increased in society, considering that both in the world economy and in the country's unified development strategy, tourism has a particular role, especially after the covid-19 pandemic, during the transformation period. The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically affected many areas of industry, causing their stagnation and huge losses (Petrović, Roblek, V., Khokhobaia, M., & Gagnidze, M., 2021) Among them, tourism is identified as well. ("Tourism Suffered Massive Losses", 2020) Due to lockdown measures, public gathering prohibition and travel limitations, traditional tourism has faced many challenges since the emergence of the coronavirus.

Nowadays the situation is stabilized. Indeed, marine tourism is not yet a priority among the types of tourism and its percentage share is still low in the structure of tourism, but the demand for it is growing and this allows for optimal forecasting.

Currently, marine transport is not the main and decisive means in the tourist market, but against the background of world trends, the statistics of realization of cruise tours in Georgia create expectations, and if the share of this type of tourism is only at the single-digit level, there are clear signs of growth in the future. Among the means of transport available today, maritime transport is relevant and often the most convenient for Georgia. (Abesadze, Robitashvili, N., Abesadze, O., & Kinkladze, R., 2022)

At the same time, correct management of these processes is vital. At the modern stage of society development, when it is necessary to manage the connection between the production and the key market in the conditions of the established conjuncture, the correct logistics plays an important role. It should be noted that the development of cruise tourism is still problematic and difficult to achieve for many countries. This problem is common for the former Soviet Republics as well as for the former "Soviet block" member states, who opted for the European vector of development recently. (Gaganidze & Ramishvili, B., 2018)

Therefore, identifying opportunities for the development of marine tourism, characterizing the mood of the population, analyzing the factors affecting the development of marine tourism, etc. is relevant and at the modern stage, its research is objectively necessary.

It is known that visitors come to the country mainly by land and air transport. The potential of cruise traffic has been underestimated, which is why the scale of its use is uncertain. Increasing the intensity of cruise traffic will also contribute to the development of cruises and tours. For this, first of all, attention should be paid to such pilot regions, where the flow of potential visitors can increase and arise impulsive or strongly formed demands for cruise tours. For this purpose, it is necessary to provide a variety of cruise tourism products, in parallel with which the staff should be taught to use appropriate services based on training, the use of innovative methods of cruise tour business planning, etc. (Abesadze, Kinkladze, R., , Giorgobiani, M., , Robitashvili, N., , & Chitaladze, K., 2021)

The main goal of the study was to determine expectations for the development of cruise tourism in Georgia.

It should be noted that cruise tourism is quite a big business. So big that according to a report by the International Association of Cruise Lines, the fastest growth rates in demand for cruise tours have been recorded since 2010. For example, from 2011 to 2016, demand for cruises increased by 20.5%. Global cruise passengers reached 25.8 million in 2017, 27.2 million in 2018, and over 32 million in 2020. (Travel Agent CRUISE INDUSTRY OUTLOOK . <https://cruising.org/>) The secret of the attraction of cruise tours is the fact that tourists are satisfied with the structure of the services received during the tours, with a wide possibility of self-realization for leisure, the best and comprehensive for travel lovers By offering the environment, etc. According to the 2020 report of the International Association of Cruise Lines, 32% of all cruise lines came to the Caribbean area, 17% to Mediterranean Europe, 5% to Alaska, 5% to China, etc.

It should be noted that before the pandemic, the number of international visitors arriving in Georgia by sea transport was characterized by an increasing trend from 2015, which significantly decreased during the pandemic period, and by 2022 we have received a 50% reduction compared to the base year of 2015.

A different picture was revealed during outbound tourism. In the year of the beginning of the pandemic, the statistical characteristics of maritime tourism were the highest, which significantly decreased in 2021, and this decrease is maintained for 2022 as well.

It should be noted that although the main cruise tours and outbound tourism for Georgian residents originate mainly from the EU countries, the statistics of the number of cruise tour users are increasing.

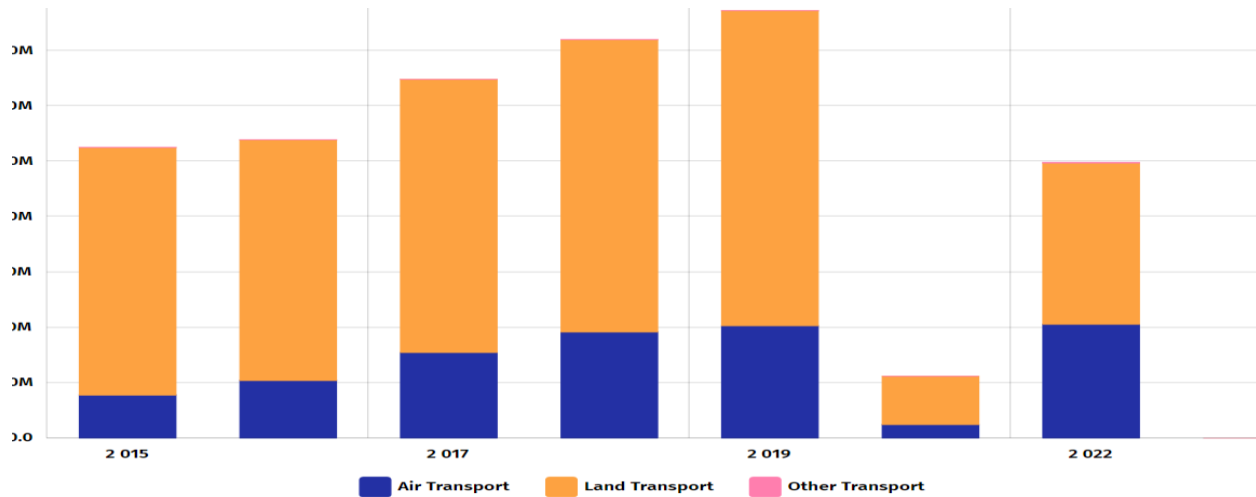
Methodology

In the research process, general (analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction, etc.), as well as specific (observation, gathering-grouping, analysis: average values, relative indicators, dynamic series, selective observation, etc.) statistical methods were used. The data was processed, and the indicators were calculated based on the computer program SPSS. As a result of the calculations, based on crosstab analysis, the research results were formed.

Results

According to official statistical data, the share of sea transport is still unclear (Figure 1). It is so small that its corresponding column is not even visible in the graphic image. However, our research conducted with the help of social networks showed that in 2022 the indicators of demand for cruises and especially in outbound tourism.

Figure 1. Number of visits by type of transport



Source: (National Statistics office of Georgia, 2023)

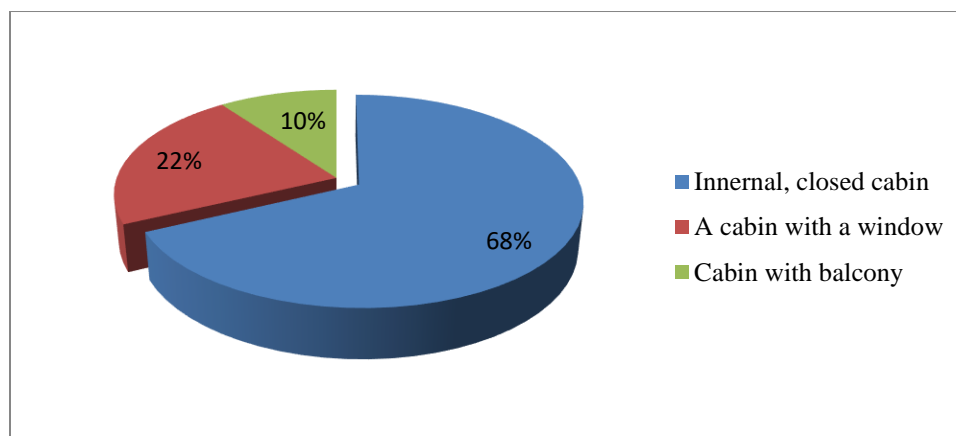
That is why our research aimed to highlight the main trends of cruise tourism in the background of the increased activity of tourism at the modern stage, the calculation of relevant indicators and statistical analysis. To form the information base of the research, we conducted a selective survey, for which we used the Google Drive application, and according to the built-in form, we obtained interesting results by processing specially prepared questionnaires with a selected design (research questionnaire, time, method). A total of 350 respondents participated in the survey, among which 60% were 25-44 years old, 45-64 years old - 24.5%, 15-24 years old - 4.1% and 1% - 65 years old and above. The absolute majority of respondents participating in the research, i.e. 78.9%, had higher education, and 7.1% had professional education. (Abesadze, Chitaladze, K., & Robitashvili, N., The results of the conducted research, 2023)

71% of respondents were employed, up to 20% were self-employed, and only 9% of respondents were unemployed. As the survey of the respondents showed, the cases of purchasing a cruise package as a group turned out to be especially popular and attractive. For example, some respondents prioritized membership in various organizations and planning cruises together with the

company based on participation. What does that mean? For example, when a person is a member of "Incruise", he enjoys various privileges, firstly, he gets a ticket at 50% of the price, and secondly, he can take three companions with one ticket. This is where the distribution principle works. In particular, a member of Incruise creates a piggy bank on his account by paying a monthly membership fee, from which, after accumulating a certain amount, the ticket fee will be paid when he selects the cruise he wants, and with the bonus points accrued on it, the ticket fee will be halved. Why and how? Half of the ticket price is paid by funds accumulated in his account, and half is paid by the company of which the person is a member) The main value of these cruises is that it is possible to take three people. In total, tourists placed in one cabin on the ship share the total amount. The cost of one ticket for such a cruise is usually around 1300 USD.

A port tax of 125 USD is added to it, and the total price for 1 (one) ticket becomes 1800 USD, which is divided between 4 people. This was the main reason for the interest of Georgian residents in such cruises. As the respondents noted, the ships they travelled with are the newest, most of which left the sea in 2022. 5 stars, 18 floors, 330 meters long, floor stairs covered with Swarovski gems, there are two 24-hour buffets. On the 16th floor, there is a large pool, entertainment centres, children's pools, concert halls, aerobics centres, etc. Except for alcoholic drinks, all other food and drinks are included in the price of the ticket. Among the residents of Georgia, for example, MSC Genoa-Laspezia-Civitavecchia (Rome) - Palma de Mallorca-Barcelona-Cannes-Genoa cruise proved to be in demand. MSC Cruises are popular; Costa Cruises; Oceania Cruises; Carnival Cruises; Princess Cruises; Norwegian Cruise Line; Cunard Line Ltd; Virgin Voyages and others. There are cruise lines. Each is served by several liners.

Figure 2. Distribution of respondents according to choice of cabins

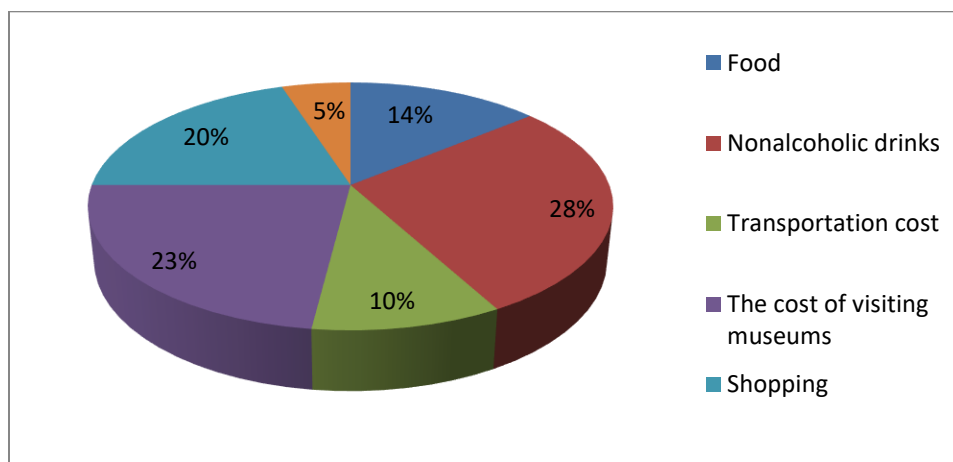


Source: (Abesadze, Chitaladze, K., & Robitashvili, N., The results of the conducted research, 2023)

The majority of respondents, 68%, prefer internal closed cabins. Only 22% choose a cabin with a window and 10% a balcony. The reason for this is of course the price. The difference between the price of indoor, closed cabins and cabins with balconies and windows exceeds 500 USD. All ships have open balconies for public use, where everyone has the opportunity to go out on this balcony, enjoy any meal and enjoy the view.

It is interesting how the cost structure is.

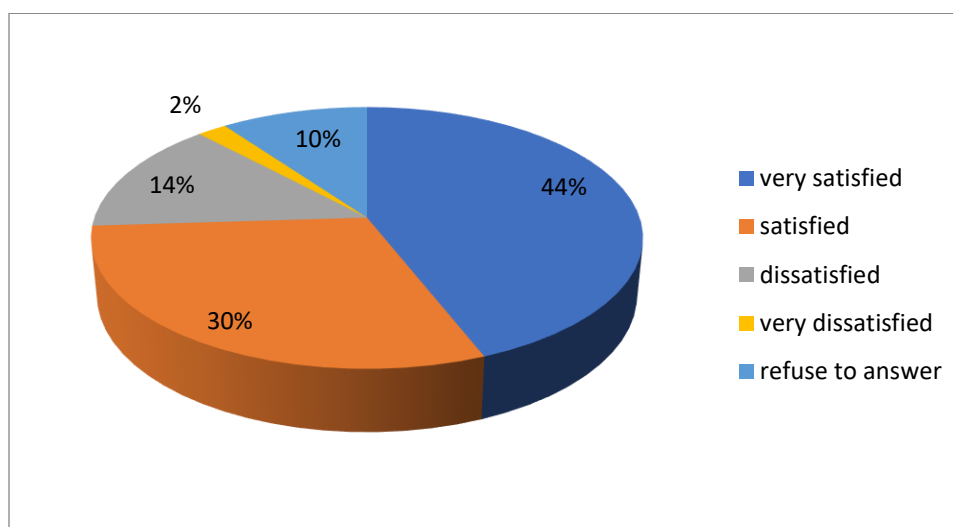
Diagram 3. Distribution of respondents according to incurred expenses



Source: (Abesadze, Chitaladze, K., & Robitashvili, N., The results of the conducted research, 2023)

In addition to cruises packed with numerous cities, it is popular to travel by air to any resort and relax.

Diagram 4. Distribution of respondents according to the level of satisfaction



Source: (Abesadze, Kinkladze, R., , Giorgobiani, M., Robitashvili, N., , & Chitaladze, K., 2021)

Internet resources and campaigning and advertising of those returning from the cruise are popular means of information dissemination.

As the research showed, the population has a positive attitude towards marine tourism, although they also state that access to marine tours is a serious problem due to their financial situation. According to the results of the research, the population of Georgia is attracted to mountain, eco, and adventure tours. 28% of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that there are no opportunities to offer cruise tours in the country, this indicates that as a result of proper support and

transformations, it is possible to modernize Georgian tour products per new, modern requirements. If given the opportunity tomorrow, according to the majority of respondents, they would go on a cruise trip, and their preferred locations were Spain, Italy and France.

Conclusions

- According to the results of our research, the level of satisfaction of Georgian resident tourists with cruise tours is high;
- The specific share of the population aged 55+ among cruise tourism travelers is quite high;
- The issue of turning the cost of cruise tickets according to the distribution principle is popular among the population of Georgia;
- Internet resources and campaigning and advertising of those returning from the cruise are popular means of information dissemination.

We can formulate the main recommendations for the development of cruise tourism in Georgia:

- Georgia should become a safe destination country for visitors;
- To activate cruise tourism, it is necessary to increase the popularization of outbound tourism; State support is important;
- It is necessary to have thematic meetings, information exhibitions, advertising videos, information banners, etc.

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