

ANALYZING THE IMPACT OF TRIPADVISOR ON AZERBAIJAN UNESCO MONUMENTS

Akif Musayev, Elmira Hajiyeva

Institute of Economics ANAS, Baku, Azerbaijan
Azerbaijan Tourism and Management University, Baku, Azerbaijan
e-mail: akif.musayev@gmail.com, e.hajiyeva@atmu.edu.az

Abstract. The purpose of the paper is to analyze the impact of TripAdvisor website on the current problems and opportunities of UNESCO monuments in Azerbaijan. The paper analyzes the reviews of tourists on the TripAdvisor website about the Maiden's Tower, the Shirvanshah Palace and the Gobustan Rock Art Cultural Landscape. All reviews and remarks of the tourists on TripAdvisor about these monuments were analyzed and solutions were provided.

Keywords: Azerbaijan, UNESCO monuments, TripAdvisor, Maiden Tower, Shirvanshah's Palace and Gobustan Rock Art Cultural Landscape, E-Tourism.

TRIPADVISOR VEBSAYTININ AZƏRBAYCANIN UNESCO ABİDƏLƏRİNƏ TƏSİRİNİN TƏHLİLİ

Akif Musayev, Elmira Hacıyeva
İqtisadiyyat İnstitutu AMEA, Bakı, Azərbaycan
Azərbaycan Turizm və Menecment Universiteti, Bakı,
Azərbaycan

Xülasə. Məqalənin məqsədi TripAdvisor veb-saytının Azərbaycandakı UNESCO abidələrində xidmətə təsirini, mövcud problemləri və imkanlarını təhlil etməkdir. Məqalədə UNESCO-nun mədəni irsinə daxil olan üç abidə - Qız qalası, Şirvanşahlar sarayı və Qobustan qoruğunda xidmətin keyfiyyətini artırmaq üçün turistlərin bütün şərtləri təhlil olunmuş və müştərilərin rəylərinə əsaslanan həll yolları təklif edilmişdir.

Açar sözlər: Azərbaycan, UNESCO-nun abidələri, TripAdvisor, Qız qalası, Şirvanşahlar sarayı, Qobustan qoruğu, Elektron turizm.

АНАЛИЗ ВЛИЯНИЯ ВЕБ-САЙТА TRIPADVISOR НА АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСКИЕ ПАМЯТНИКИ ЮНЕСКО

Акиф Мусаев, Эльмира Гаджиева
Институт Экономики НАНА, Баку, Азербайджан
Азербайджанский Университет Туризма и
Менеджмента, Баку, Азербайджан

Резюме. Цель данной статьи – проанализировать влияние сайта TripAdvisor на текущие проблемы и возможности памятников ЮНЕСКО в Азербайджане. В статье анализируются отзывы туристов на веб-сайте TripAdvisor о Девичьей башне, Дворце Ширваншахов и Гобустанском заповеднике. Были проанализированы все отзывы, оставленные туристами на сайте TripAdvisor об этих трех памятниках и представлены решения, основанные на отзывах клиентов.

Ключевые слова: Азербайджан, памятники ЮНЕСКО, TripAdvisor, Девичья башня, Дворец Ширваншахов, Гобустанский заповедник, Электронный туризм.

1. Introduction

Internet technology changed how the tourists travel and plan their trip to other places. Nowadays, the tourists have options to choose an appropriate and suitable tour packages for their trip. They also can get the tourists' feedbacks from different travel websites like TripAdvisor, lonely planet, virtual tourist, booking.com, which makes their visit more

comfortable and easy. One of the famous travel website where the tourists can get information about their planned destination is TripAdvisor. It is like a guestbook where the people records their highs and lows about their holiday [3].

Nowadays consumer consult online reviews before booking their bookings. Information technology has transformed the way how people get and share information in developed and developing countries. Several studies explore the issue of online reviews, or electronic word-of-mouth, focusing mainly on matters such as motivations of, and social dynamics between, users and contributors of review sites.

2. Literature review

Fast development of Internet creates a new consumer behavior and at the same time, it changes the search and findings methods. New methodology influences the behavior of people and people do not hesitate to share their experience in social media. With the help of internet, everyone can share the information, feelings, and experiences, even write comment and communicate with other consumers. It calls “internet word of mouth”. The paper will analyze the comments of TripAdvisor about the three monuments that included to the heritage of UNESCO. The comments are from the tourists who visited those monuments and shared their feedback, experience with other tourists.

In the information society where technology is the defining characteristic, information is defined in terms of the probabilities of occurrence of symbols and its quantity is measured in bits. According to Freeman (1987) Information and Communication Technology innovations are the harbinger of a new epoch that will have longer term economic benefits. New information technology has reached the peak in the 21st century. Technology has developed the popularity of smart devices, mobile applications, adoption of software programs etc.

The system allows the users to reach the information everywhere on the internet and retrieve the documents which are needed. Basic ideas about new system was developed and implemented by late 1990. The information on the web referred by several different names like resources, documents, pages [5].

As internet in high demand, it influences the development of destinations. Tourism organizations are aware of high demand on internet and that is why try to have official websites and pages on internet in order to engage with the current and potential tourists. Due to economic power of tourism, the destinations are developing and have a competitive advantage among competitors. Destinations try to get more visibility and use the internet in order to reach the popularity in the world.

Destination Marketing Organizations often recognized as a governmental agency however, these organizations supported by private organizations. Tourism sector has changed a lot and became smarter by application of new technologies. For example, social media,

mobile applications, photograph and video sharing platforms are very important and powerful to communicate easily with customers.

New technologies create models for evaluating Destination Management Organizations websites in the last ten years. Morrison (2013) argue that websites are very important for Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO) marketing strategy. Those websites help to build relationship with tourists, allow bookings and reservations. It helps to generate databases [4].

TripAdvisor has a great impact on tourists' choices before they travel; tourists prefer to learn from other tourists' experiences. According to the rules of TripAdvisor, everyone can be a member, write their feedback, review all comments etc. [6].

Information technology doubles in performance of work.

3. Analyzing the role of customer reviews

Last two decades it becomes very popular to look through the experienced customers' reviews before purchasing any product and service. Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) argue that the impact of e-Word of Mouth (eWOM) increased dramatically. By time, e-Word of Mouth became a reliable and influential source for customers. Last studies shows that a big percentage of the customers always go to the websites of any places before booking rooms, browsing forums, visiting old monuments and other servers and only after this they make their choice. The customers started to believe in experienced customer rather than companies' information.

TripAdvisor Website. A TripAdvisor website is one of the biggest website for travelers and serves in 28 languages with free application. Popularity and reliability of website make the travelers leave the comments about their experience. According to TripAdvisor regulations, when the comments reaches 225, the user gets a special offer for hotels, tickets, restaurants and social activities (www.tripadvisor.com.tr, 2016).

Features of TripAdvisor are below:

- ✓ Millions of feedbacks shared by users (travelers)
- ✓ Opportunity to compare the price to get the best option
- ✓ Every user can share the experience
- ✓ Provides map for clear understanding

4. Methodolgy

Approach to research can be qualitative or quantitative. According to Guba & Lincoln (1994) the choice of the approach is largely dependable on the defined research problems and the kind of data in solving the problems. Qualitative approach usually involves small sample, with the data in the form of written or spoken words, actions, sounds, physical objects or visual images. Approach to the research is inductive. Inductive research is whenit begins from a specific reason in the environment, to collect the data with an aim to generalize it.

The academic research paper based on secondary data collected from TripAdvisor website.

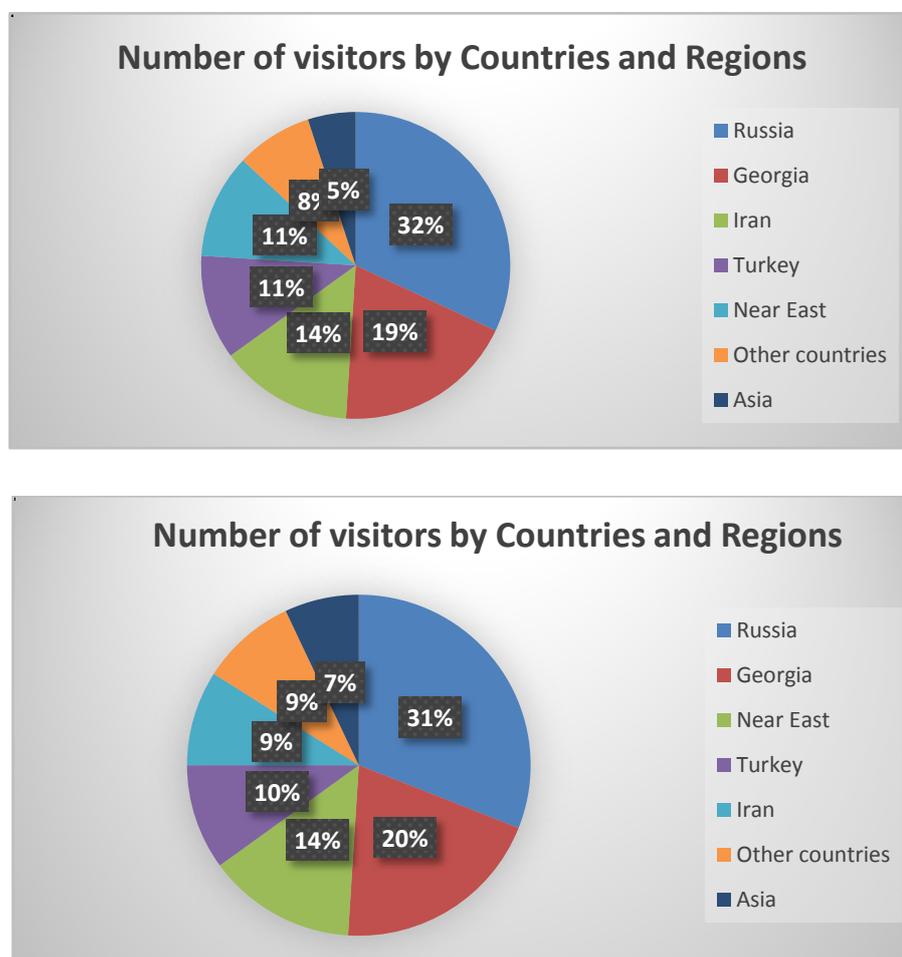


Figure 1. Market Indicators for 4 Countries and 2 Regions by the First 9 Months of 2017 and 2018.

Source. Azerbaijan Tourism Board. <http://bit.ly/SepStatAz>

If to analyze these pie charts, it obvious that there is a 6% increase in number of visitors in 2018 from January to September. There is dependence in number of tourists and number of tourists visiting the monuments. Increase in number of tourists will also affect the awareness of UNESCO monuments. The chance of promotion will automatically raise (Azerbaijan Tourism Board, 2018) [2].

Total number of visitors

From January to September 2017, 2.07 mln.

In January-September 2018 2.20 mln.

Increase percentage - +6 % (Source: Azerbaijan Tourism Board)

5. Data analysis

All comments about three UNESCO monuments of Azerbaijan on TripAdvisor travel website were analyzed by authors. It is obvious from the bar chart that the feedbacks about Maiden Tower is a little bit more. Based on comments on TripAdvisor there were overall 1387 comments about three monuments by time 17 th February, 2019. 756 comments were about Gobustan Rock Art Cultural Landscape, 1420 comments were about Maiden Tower, and 492 comments were about Shirvanshah's Palace. The authors analyzed every comment in order to find out the problems and evaluate the opportunities for future development of monuments. The bar chart shows the number of comments on TripAdvisor about three monuments in percentage.

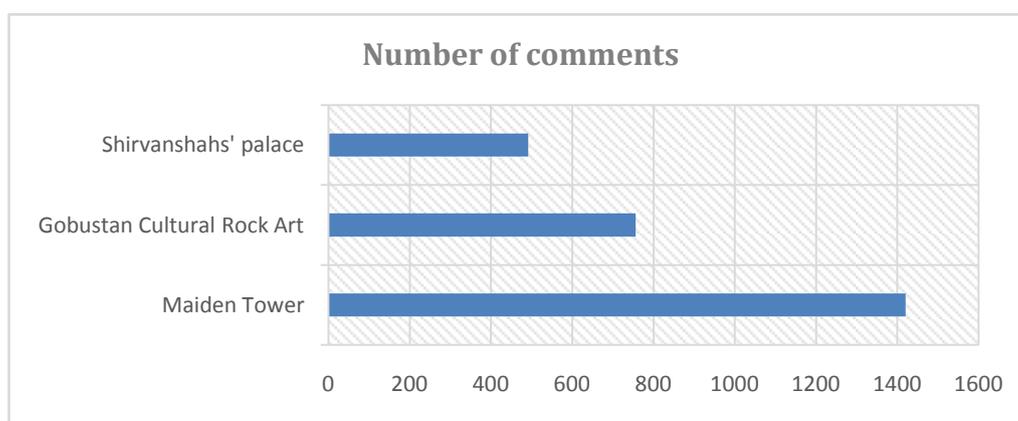


Figure 2. Number of comments in percentage about three monuments

The bar chart shows the number of comments about three UNESCO monuments like Shirvanshahs' Palace, Maiden Tower and Gobustan Cultural Rock Art which included to the UNESCO heritage. In the first place, with the majority of comments stands the Maiden Tower shared by visited travelers (1420 comments). In the second place, Gobustan Cultural Rock Art with 756 comments. The Shirvanshahs' Palace with the numbers of comments (492 comments) in the third place, the least comments. The collected data by authors helped to analyze the feedback left by travelers.

Shirvanshahs' Palacedata analysis. Travelers who visited the monument left 492 comments by 17th of February 2019. Three travelers out of 492 were dissatisfied of ticket price and wrote comments of their dissatisfaction. These three travelers commented about the high price of entry tickets. The travelers were dissatisfied on price differences between local people and tourists. Generally, based on comments the tourists enjoyed the history of monument.

Maiden Tower data analysis. Travelers who visited and shared their opinions about the Maiden Tower were dissatisfied with dirty glasses and the high price of tickets and one

traveler did not find the monument of XXII century very attractive from inside. Dissatisfied travelers percentage is 1%.

Gobustan Cultural Rock Art. Authors also analyzed the comments of travelers about Gobustan Cultural Rock Art. The main problem about this monument was in transportation system. There is not a direct transportation from city center to Gobustan Cultural Rock Art. The tourists should take two different buses in order to reach the monument. Another problem was in illegal price strategy of taxi. The illegal taxi drivers was offering the taxi service for high price. The tourists who do not want to pay for the service (comfort) and thought that it is expensive they were dissatisfied with this case. Some tourists were complaining about the lack of signage.

Because of collected data, it is important to note that the main concern of some tourists were about transportation issues while visiting Gobustan Cultural Rock Art monuments, the high price of entry tickets to the Maiden Tower and Shirvanshahs' Palace.

Table 1. Price of monuments for local and foreign visitors

The name of Monuments	Price ticket for foreign visitors	Price ticket for local visitors
Shirvanshahs' Palace	12 manat	2 manat
Maiden Tower	15manat	3manat
Gobustan Cultural Rock Art	10 manat	4 manat

Manat –Azerbaijan currency

Sources:

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/azerbaijan/baku/attractions/palace-of-the-shirvanshahs/a/poi-sig/444235/358673>

<http://www.gobustan-rockart.az/en/pages/2/>

<https://www.viator.com/tours/Baku/Maiden-Tower-Admission-Ticket/d22974-63022P12>

The table presents the price of entry tickets for UNESCO monuments of Azerbaijan for local people and for tourists. The price strategy is differs depending on age groups, status of person etc. The prices for entry tickets is more expensive for tourists than for local people. The lack of signage in the road to Gobustan was one of the main issues based on TripAdvisor's comments (www.gobustan-rockart.az, 2019).

6. Recommendation & Conclusion

In this academic paper, the authors conducted a research, based on the comments on TripAdvisor travel website. The study has shown that some problems needed to take into account by related agencies and enterprises. The paper proves that the impact of TripAdvisor on travellers' choice is high. Potential tourists prefer to read the comments of experienced

tourists before visiting the destination. After analysing the comments of experienced tourists, they make a decision by influence of TripAdvisor. The last two decades, social platforms play an important role in our daily life decisions. The raising amount of literature in this area provided us with the few main implications that information technology and software. The high price concerns of very small percentage of tourists is subjective opinion. If consider the ages of these monuments which are included to the heritage of UNESCO and the price strategy of Europe monuments, to consider as well as currency of our country then the price for tourists is quite normal. If consider the currency of country it makes approximately 5 euro per person which is quite normal for tourists from USA, Europe. If to increase the awareness of those monuments to the world, the price cannot be a discussion case. Let us have a look at some famous monuments' price list and analyse the price of other famous monuments' entry price. As an example, we can show the "Tower of Eiffel" which costs approximately 9 euro per person. The second concern of some tourists were about transportation system which is really needs to solve by organizing shuttle from city centre directly to Gobustan Cultural Rock Art. The lack of amenities and facilities like restaurants, cafes, entertainments also make the destination boring. The development of such infrastructure is not an easy process and needs a very good project plan. One tourists was dissatisfied with the modern restoration of the Maiden Tower. The tourist mentioned that the restoration method needs a careful approach and should be done properly by saving the originality of monument. Restoration process of monuments cost a lot and needs very good specialists. Generally, the tourists who visited these three UNESCO monuments were very satisfied and liked the city very much. Some group of tourists who used the guided tour also learned the history of those monuments and were really surprised how old history our country has.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Entry ticket prices for Gobustan Cultural Rock Art

Entrance Ticket	Citizens	Foreigners	Students	Pupils	"Mini Gobustan" interactive tour
Price	4.00 AZN	10.00 AZN	1.00 AZN	0.40 AZN	5.00 AZN

Source: <http://www.gobustan-rockart.az/en/pages/2/>

Palace of the Shirvanshahs Admission Ticket



The Palace of the Shirvanshahs is a 15th-century palace built by the Shirvanshahs and described by UNESCO as "one of the pearls of Azerbaijan's architecture". It is located in the Inner City of Baku, ... [Learn More](#)

- ✓ Free Cancellation
- 🕒 1 to 2 hours (Approx.)

from **\$5.88 USD**

[Check Availability](#)

Source: <https://www.viator.com/Baku/d22974-ttd/63022P11>

Maiden Tower Admission Ticket

Baku, Azerbaijan

[Share](#) [Save to Wishlist](#)



from **\$7.06 USD**

Lowest Price Guarantee

Select Date and Travelers

📅 Tuesday, Apr 23, 2019

👤 Number of travelers

[Check Availability](#)

Source: <https://www.viator.com/tours/Baku/Maiden-T>