

Chasing Snowflakes: Tourists' Winter Tales of Wonder, Motivation, and Challenges in Georgia and Armenia

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Background. Blanketed in snow and steeped in heritage, Georgia and Armenia offer immersive winter journeys where distinct culture and hospitality converge. Beyond simply witnessing the landscape, travelers engage with Georgia's celebrated wines and mountains and Armenia's deep historical roots, savoring authentic cuisine and preserved landmarks. Despite minor logistical challenges, the region's genuine warmth leaves a lasting positive impression. Drawing on these encounters, this study analyzes authentic stories of food, hospitality, and destinations to inform strategies that enhance visitor satisfaction and promote these nations as premier cultural winter tourism hubs.

Methods. This study used a narrative inquiry design to explore the tourism experiences of two Filipino male travelers, aged 32–50, working in Qatar with extensive international travel backgrounds. Data were collected through unstructured interviews, with ethical standards ensured through informed consent and confidentiality. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were upheld through triangulation, thick description, coding-recoding, audit trails, and reflexivity. Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's thematic process, resulting in a rich, accurate portrayal of participants' experiences while protecting their identities using aliases.

Results. Tourists traveling to Georgia and Armenia were primarily drawn by the magic of winter tourism, enchanted by the beauty of snow-covered landscapes, rich cultural heritage, vibrant local cuisine, and the heartfelt hospitality of the people. Although minor challenges such as long layovers, accommodation adjustments, and language differences arose, visitors emphasized that these were small compared to the unforgettable winter experiences, making their journeys deeply rewarding, memorable, and highly recommended for future travelers.

Conclusion. A journey to Georgia and Armenia promises unforgettable moments where snow-kissed landscapes, timeless landmarks, vibrant culture, and heartfelt hospitality come together to create an experience like no other. From strolling under falling snow to savoring authentic local dishes and exploring sacred heritage sites, every step tells a story. Even the minor challenges along the way become part of the adventure, leaving travelers with cherished memories and an irresistible desire to return.

Practical Value of the Paper. This study examines how Georgia and Armenia offer immersive winter journeys characterized by rich cultural heritage, stunning natural landscapes, and exceptional hospitality. Through an analysis of authentic travel experiences, the research highlights the unique appeal of Georgia's snow-covered mountains and vibrant cuisine alongside Armenia's architectural wonders and community warmth. The findings identify key factors driving visitor satisfaction while recommending improvements in logistics and cultural promotion to establish these nations as premier global winter destinations.

Directions for Future Research. Future research should focus on optimizing hospitality and tourism management in Georgia and Armenia to elevate visitor experiences. Investigations into strengthening accommodations, logistics, and language support—alongside expanding culturally immersive and sustainable winter tourism—can drive continued sector growth. By leveraging the region's distinct culture and natural beauty, these strategies will ensure increasingly memorable and meaningful journeys for global travelers.

Keywords: hospitality and tourism management, winter tales, travel motivation, appreciation, challenges, qualitative narrative inquiry, Georgia, Armenia

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