

Sustainable Mountain Tourism in Georgia: Current Situation and Key Trends

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Abstract

Georgia is distinguished by its unique mountainous landscapes, biodiversity, and rich cultural heritage, all of which represent significant potential for the sustainable development of mountain tourism. In recent years, the role of eco-communities, national parks, and protected areas has been increasing, contributing to improved management of tourist flows and the preservation of natural resources. Infrastructure development is also underway in the country, including the rehabilitation of local roads, the marking of hiking and driving routes, and the refinement of adventure tourism standards. Despite this progress, several challenges remain: growing environmental pressure on popular destinations, insufficient ecological awareness, low sustainability standards among small and medium-sized businesses, and limited economic participation of local communities. Contemporary approaches in Georgia include the development of community-based tourism, climate adaptation practices, and the introduction of green technologies. The findings indicate that strengthening sustainable governance, supporting local populations, and integrating ecological strategies are essential for ensuring that Georgia's mountain regions remain environmentally resilient and economically viable tourist destinations.

Keywords: *Mountain sustainable tourism, tourism product, tourism seasonality*

მთის მდგრადი ტურიზმი საქართველოში: არსებული ვითარება და ძირითადი ტენდენციები

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აბსტრაქტი

საქართველო გამოირჩევა უნიკალური მთიანი ლანდშაფტებით, ბიომრავალფეროვნებითა და კულტურული მემკვიდრეობით, რაც წარმოადგენს დიდი პოტენციალს მთის ტურიზმის მდგრადი განვითარებისათვის. ბოლო წლებში ქვეყანაში იზრდება ეკო-საზოგადოებების, ეროვნული პარკებისა და დაცული ტერიტორიების როლი, რაც ხელს უწყობს ტურისტული ნაკადების მართვასა და ბუნებრივი რესურსების შენარჩუნებას. საქართველოში მიმდინარეობს ინფრასტრუქტურული გაუმჯობესებაც - ადგილობრივი გზების რეაბილიტაცია, საფეხმავლო და საავტომობილო მარშრუტების მარკირება, სათავგადასავლო ტურიზმის სტანდარტების დახვეწა. მიუხედავად პროგრესისა, კვლავ მნიშვნელოვანი გამოწვევებია: გარემოზე ზეწოლის ზრდა პოპულარულ ლოკაციებზე, არასაკმარისი ეკოლოგიური ცნობიერება, მცირე და საშუალო ბიზნესების დაბალი მდგრადობის სტანდარტები და ადგილობრივი თემების ეკონომიკური ჩართულობის დეფიციტი.

თანამედროვე მიდგომები საქართველოში მოიცავს საზოგადოებაზე დაფუძნებული ტურიზმის განვითარებას, კლიმატის ცვლილებასთან ადაპტაციის პრაქტიკებს, მწვანე ტექნოლოგიების დანერგვას. კვლევის შედეგები მიუთითებს, რომ მდგრადი მმართველობის გაძლიერება, ადგილობრივი მოსახლეობის მხარდაჭერა და ეკოლოგიური სტრატეგიების ინტეგრირება აუცილებელია, რათა საქართველოს მთიანი რეგიონებმა შეინარჩუნოს გარემოსდაცვაზე ორიენტირებული ტურისტული მიმართულებები.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: მთის მდგრადი ტურიზმი, ტურისტული პროდუქტი, ტურიზმის სეზონურობა

The relevance of the work is: Mountain tourism is one of the important directions of the Georgian economy and regional development. Against the background of growing interest, special importance is attached to the observance of the principles of sustainable development, so that the growth of tourism does not damage the natural environment and the social structure of local communities. Therefore, it is necessary to assess the current situation in the mountainous regions of the country and establish a sustainable development model.

Work The goal is In Georgia Mountain Sustainable Tourism Development Modern Condition Study And Analysis , problems Identification And Their To solve Possible Roads Offer .

Presentation of the problem of the paper - poor infrastructure in mountainous regions, seasonality of tourism, insufficient knowledge and education about sustainable tourism, and the impact of climate change.

The importance of sustainable tourism is explained in the "Global Code of Ethics for Tourism" (at General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization, Santiago, Chile, 1 October 1999) , according to which tourism is a factor of individual and collective improvement; a factor of sustainable development; a sphere that uses the cultural heritage of humanity and contributes to its enrichment; an activity that is equally useful and profitable for the countries and peoples participating in it. This definition emphasizes the global importance of tourism and its sustainable development, which is unthinkable without the united efforts of the state at the national level, and globally, without the united efforts of the states interested in tourism. [8, p.104]

The mountains of Georgia, as well as The entire world of development And Technological processes Ascension Ecological and environmental background Problem And Challenges in front of It turned out that the world's global ecological disasters, manifested in climate change, have led to the destruction of habitats. Degradation , water And Atmospheric Air Pollution, which significantly It affects human agricultural and industrial activities. Georgia has Fast Economic Growth Clear Interest , however The recent Current The processes in which the role of the tourism business has been highlighted are important Sustainable tourism development Goals Achievement . [8, p.106]

Georgia Located The greatest Mountainous In the region - Caucasus With mountains And Many Preserved Mountainous with settlements . This Conditions creates Natural Potential For tourism , especially - Mountain And Nature Visiting In the direction of . Mountainous Regions Development is As Regional From the perspective of equality (equal-development) important , so Tourist Products Diversity Creation In terms of . [7, p. 134]

Same Time , mountain In the regions Presented Enough Challenges : Population Deficiency , infrastructural Restrictions , environmental Impact High Sensitivity .

Mountain Tourism Sustainability implies Tourism development Such In a way that :

- Provides Natural Environment And Cultural Inheritance maintenance ;

- Strengthens Local societies (creates Work places , income sources);
- Hand It helps Regions Economic development so that No to confront Nature And Culture .

The government promotes sustainable mountain development through the following activities:

- The government received Strategy " Mountain " Settlements Development Plan – 2019-2023 .
- International With platforms On Georgia , for example, GRETA – Green Economy: Sustainable Mountain Tourism & Organic Agriculture project , European Union , Austria , Sweden With co- financing
- **Specific Projects Mountainous In the regions**
- GRETA project Within was held Trainings Small And Medium For business Mountainous In the regions , it is carried out Tourist Products Development .
- UNDP And Other Institutions With support Created Four Basic Tourist product , for example - Tourist Paths Borjomi -Kharagauli In a protected area .
- Academic Direction : Georgia Technical At the university Created Faculty of Mountain Science Sustainable for development " , which It is important. Mountain Tourism Teaching .
- **Regional Examples**
- Region Svaneti - multifunctional Adventure Tourism Base : Dam Forests , ancient Villages , architecture And Historical and cultural heritage.
- In 2023 In hotels And Pilot In events Get involved Svaneti region : organized International Tracking The Highlander Festival , which It was designed to be sustainable. On tourism .

Examples of regions:

Svaneti region

Project GRETA (“Green Economy: Sustainable Mountain Tourism & Organic Agriculture”) - whose Within the framework Svaneti and Other Mountainous Regions Municipalities participated , with the aim of It was depicted Mountain Tourism And Organic Rural Farming Development Promotion of S.

Innovations And Practices

- Region Tourism Development Strategy And Action Preparation of a Destination Management Plan , which It is made up . Private And Public Stakeholders With participation .
- New Tourist Product and Planning directions: Biking , Adventure Tourism , ecotourism Cultural resources Considering .

Svaneti Example It shows us that When Local Society And Tourism Sector Between is Engagement And Planned Tourism Management Plan , Sustainable For development Better conditions are created .

Borjomi-Kharagauli Mountainous Region

The project , funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Other Partners They were financing , included Tourist Infrastructure Arrangement Mountainous In the regions .

Innovations And Practices

- In Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park In the park Created New Tourist The path that Connects Several Settlement And I propose as Nature values , as well as Historical - cultural Inheritance.
- Created necessary for tourism Infrastructure A (camping , tourist Cottages and others) ecotourism Standards With protection .

Mountainous region of Upper Adjara

Upper Adjara Municipality , Evshi Implemented Tourism Development Projects that They consider Adventure Tourism Elements " Europe " Most Long Zipline " And Cycling / Trailing

Innovations And Practices

- Zipline Arrangement - Adventure To the tour Growing Request Considering .
- Bicycle And Hiking routes Arrangement , touristic With safe sections Specially Mountainous For places .

Example shows that Innovative Tourist Products Implementation, Active There is a way. Tourist Seasons Diversification And Regions Better For presentation .

Despite this, the main **challenges** for sustainable tourism in mountainous regions **are**:

• Infrastructure And Services

Roads Often Difficult The issue Represents .

• Environment Protection Practice Less Implementation

Mountainous Regions Environment Vulnerable - Are you here ? Ecologically Sensitive Zones . Tourism Unplanned growth Maybe To cause Environment Degradation .

In some In case Such Risk It is visible - for example , tourist Seasons Planning And Resources Functioning Disadvantages .

• Local Society Engagement

Sustainable Tourism One of them The principle is that To the locals To be involved in tourism Participation And Usefulness . However Certain in my opinion In the country As a challenge Remains : if What In part It happens Local Society About Informed Decisions Acceptance , how much Meets Tourism In production Local Entrepreneur Or Small Businesses . GRETA Project Exactly This It was depicted Aim .

• Seasonality And Focus One On the direction

Main As a challenge Remains Tourism Concentrate Only Seasonal (winter , snow) Sports) and Less - whole Year During Diversity On offer . This Growth The risk that Tourism No There will be Sustainable And Economically In his head On top There will be Dependent Small On the period .

Of the future Ways , conclusions and Recommendations

• **Diverse Tourist Products Development Promotion**

Winter Directional Besides , more Attention I must Dedicated to : summer Trekking , ecotourism Destinations , cultural Tourism And Local Everyday Inheritance Integration , which will make the tourism product more diverse and develop it. **Service Quality Ascension**
Service Quality - implies Guides Certification and training/retraining of the public involved in the tourism industry.

A. **Legal Society complete Turn on**

Local The population I must to be given Participation And Useful More Possibility B, This means Entrepreneurship Promotion , local Brands development , rural Farming And Tourism Union For example, agrotourism Even the development of difficulties.

Environmental Standards Study And Protection

Sustainability means No Only economic , but also Natural Environment Impact Reduction in tourism Activities I must to have Regulations - Environmental Impact Evaluation , less Hurt the bull Spaces Maintenance , tourists Quantitatively Management And A. Sh .

Less dependence on seasonality

Tourism Popularization Mountainous In the regions Whole Year During - Miscellaneous In season - hand Will help Region Income Stability And Less There will be Unstable Influence Under .

Therefore, the mountain Sustainable Tourism In the direction In Georgia Many steps have been taken : strategic Documents , International Projects , activities In real life In the regions . However , as Almost All In the country , challenges Remaining - Infrastructure , seasonality , local Society Engagement , environment Impact Control .

If Georgia Will be able to to maintain Nature And Culture Components , and with Development Pace So to manage that No D to harm Natural And Cultural heritage, Then Mountainous Regions They will be able to Become No Only For tourists Attractive places , but Local For the population Prosperity Reason .

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