

ALTERNATIVE TOURISM, IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

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Presented by the Scientific Committee of the 1st International Conference and the Institute of Geography and Tourism of the Tskhum-Abkhazian Academy of Sciences

Abstract. Approaches to tourism in the modern world are a subject of constant discussion. Recently, more and more critical opinions are expressed about the negative impact of mass tourism on the environment. The development of the tourism market of the future is considered through alternative forms of tourism.

The problems of developing alternative tourism as a key part of the concept of sustainable tourism differ significantly between countries, taking into account economic, social and environmental factors. Alternative tourism combines tourism products or individual tourism services that differ from mass tourism in terms of delivery, organization and human resources. Alternative tourism is the application of sustainable development practices to tourism in regions where tourism has been chosen as a factor in economic development. Today, the popularity of specific forms of alternative tourism such as “ecotourism”, “volunteer tourism” and “voluntourism” has increased significantly. Tourism development, both in the countries of the world and in Georgia, is considered as a sustainable development tool through various government programs and strategies.

Keywords: *Alternative tourism, voluntourism, ecotourism, sustainable tourism.*

Introduction. By 2030, tourism sustainability can be achieved through a positive balance of environmental, socio-cultural and economic aspects of the tourism industry, which is necessary to ensure favorable working conditions, life and preservation of the local population of the destination.

The 21st Century Agenda for the Travel and Tourism Industry explains: Sustainable tourism products are products that are in harmony with the local environment, society, culture in a way that benefits rather than harms tourism development. Sustainability becomes the main

challenge in developing quality tourism products without negative impact on the natural and cultural environment that sustains and cares for them [1].

Approaches to tourism in the modern world are a subject of constant discussion. The development of the tourism market of the future is considered through alternative forms of tourism. Tourism can be divided into two main groups known as mass tourism and alternative tourism. These two types of tourism are different from each other. The concept of alternative tourism inseparably includes socio-economic, cultural and environmental dimensions.

Peculiarities of Alternative Tourism. The practice of moving people from country to country has a long history. For centuries, people have been traveling to distant parts of the world and getting to know new and foreign cultures, languages, cuisines, customs, and more. In the twentieth century, this practice took on an organized and mass character, which, in turn, led to the establishment of the concept of tourism. Recently, more and more critical opinions have been expressed about the negative impact of mass tourism on the environment. Too many tourist activities lead to the degradation of unique natural and historical sites. Today, tourism is one of the fastest-growing mass industries in the world, although alternative forms of mass tourism have emerged over the past few decades. Mass tourism is the organized movement of large numbers of people to specialized places. Alternative tourism involves small groups. Over the past few decades, tourists from high-income countries have increasingly turned to alternative forms of travel that provide rewarding experiences and promise sustainable development [2].

The problems of developing alternative tourism as a key part of the concept of sustainable tourism differ significantly between countries, taking into account economic, social and environmental factors. Tourism development, both in the countries of the world and in Georgia, is considered as a sustainable development tool through various government programs and strategies. Alternative tourism combines tourism products or individual tourism services that differ from mass tourism in terms of delivery, organization and human resources. Alternative tourism is the application of sustainable development practices to tourism in regions where tourism has been chosen as a factor in economic development. Today, the popularity of specific forms of alternative tourism such as “ecotourism”, “volunteer tourism” and “Voluntourism” has increased significantly [1].

In scientific studies, alternative tourism is described as “a form of tourism that is consistent with natural, social and community values and allows hosts and guests to enjoy positive and valuable relationships and shared experiences”. Providing alternative tourism experiences such as “ecotourism”, “voluntourism” - is fundamentally consistent with sustainability to ensure that impacts on resources and destinations are minimized.

Environmental factors such as the host community, biodiversity, and the prevention of irreversible environmental changes are emphasized in the sustainability literature. As a result of these factors, volunteer tourism has recently emerged as a phenomenon in the field of alternative tourism experiences. Ecotourism is a form of tourism developed using ecological resources: mountains, lakes, lagoons, valleys, caves, rich flora and fauna. Ecotourism is essential to understanding not only volunteer tourism, but also alternative tourism. The term itself covers a wide range of connotations: tourists with specific motivations, tourism practices, tourism products, technology levels, planning decisions, local, regional, national and international policies and as a development strategy. From the definitions of volunteer tourism and ecotourism, we can see that the main goal is to maintain the well-being of the local community where tourism takes place. Volunteer tourism can be seen as a development strategy that leads to sustainable development and is focused on the convergence of natural resources, locals and visitors who benefit from tourism activities [3].

The concept of “tourist-volunteer” has the following definition - this is a person, a volunteer, who voluntarily agreed to help the community for free, is responsible for fulfilling his obligations, combines voluntary work. Voluntourism is a form of tourism in which travelers participate in voluntary work, usually for charity. Their work can be related to agriculture, healthcare, education and many other fields. Another benefit of volunteerism is its role in poverty alleviation. If done in a sustainable way, volunteerism helps sustain local economies. The difference between volunteering and voluntarism is that volunteering is (we) dependent on volunteers to perform an important social or educational function, and voluntarism is (we)'s reliance on volunteers to support an institution or achieve a goal [4].

As M. Kruglova explains, “volunteer tourism can be considered a popular form of international travel that allows each volunteer to make an individual contribution to the sustainable development of tourism in the host country” [5]. Volunteers consider their work as a tool for social, cultural, economic and environmental development. Alternative tourism is a “new” form of tourism that tries to get closer to the local socio-political and economic reality. It strives to initiate a new relationship between tourists and host communities. Its main idea is to bring tourists closer to the local community. Integrating them into local life instead of locking them in a tourist enclave cut off from the outside world. The local community should be involved at all stages of the process: in decision-making, tourism planning and development and also in managing the final tourism product. Participatory form of governance, needs and wishes of local people should be introduced in the system. Alternative tourism experiences, contextualized in relation to the different elements of volunteerism, serious recreation and

ecotourism, facilitate interactions within the destination area. Alternative tourism tries to find and spread new opportunities for different, non-traditional forms of tourism [6].

Conclusion. Although tourism is recognized as an economic savior that provides jobs and boosts GDP, it is now also seen as the source of a wide range of serious problems, especially in developing economies. Alternative tourism is considered to be the most positive motive for tourism, because alternative tourists want to be more with living cultures. Instead of using special tourist accommodation and facilities, they prefer to use or share the services of local people. In this way, they get the opportunity to experience some aspect of their life. Alternative tourism combines tourism products or individual tourism services that differ from mass tourism in terms of delivery, organization and human resources involved. Due to its nature, ecotourism, volunteer tourism and the development of volunteerism in Georgia:

- It should be based on dialogue with the local population, which should be informed about its effects
- Must be carried out in an environmentally friendly environment and respect local culture and religious traditions
- Its scale should be adjusted to the development possibilities of the local area, measured from an aesthetic and ecological point of view
- Requires environmentally sensitive behavior and operation of tourists and operators.

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ალტერნატიული ტურიზმი, მდგრადი ტურიზმის კონტექსტში

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წარდგენილია ცხუმ-აფხაზეთის მეცნიერებათა აკადემიის I საერთაშორისო კონფერენციის სამეცნიერო კომიტეტისა და გეოგრაფიისა და ტურიზმის ინსტიტუტის მიერ

აბსტრაქტი. თანამედროვე მსოფლიოში ტურიზმის მიმართ მიდგომები მუდმივი მსჯელობის საგანია. ბოლო დროს სულ უფრო და უფრო მეტი კრიტიკული აზრი გამოითქმის მასობრივი ტურიზმის, გარემოზე ნეგატიური ზემოქმედების შესახებ. მომავლის ტურისტული ბაზრის განვითარება განიხილება ტურიზმის ალტერნატიული ფორმების მეშვეობით.

ალტერნატიული ტურიზმის განვითარების პრობლემები, როგორც მდგრადი ტურიზმის კონცეფციის საკვანძო ნაწილი, მნიშვნელოვნად განსხვავდება ქვეყნებში, ეკონომიკურ, სოციალურ და გარემო ფაქტორების გათვალისწინებით. ალტერნატიული ტურიზმი აერთიანებს ტურისტულ პროდუქტებს ან ინდივიდუალურ ტურისტულ სერვისებს, რომლებიც განსხვავდება მასობრივი ტურიზმისგან მიწოდების, ორგანიზაციისა და ადამიანური რესურსების მეშვეობით. ალტერნატიული ტურიზმი არის მდგრადი განვითარების პრაქტიკის გამოყენება ტურიზმისთვის იმ რეგიონებში, სადაც ტურიზმი არჩეულია ეკონომიკური განვითარების ფაქტორად. დღეისათვის, ალტერნატიული ტურიზმის კონკრეტული ფორმების პოპულარობა, როგორცაა “ეკოტურიზმი”, “მოხალისე ტურიზმი” და “ვოლუნტურიზმი” მნიშვნელოვნად გაიზარდა. ტურიზმის განვითარება, როგორც მსოფლიო ქვეყნებში ასევე საქართველოშიც განიხილება, როგორც მდგრადი განვითარების ინსტრუმენტი სხვადასხვა სამთავრობო პროგრამებისა და სტრატეგიების მეშვეობით.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: ალტერნატიული ტურიზმი, ვოლუნტურიზმი, ეკოტურიზმი, მდგრადი ტურიზმი.