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## ASPECTS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF ECOLOGICAL TOURISM IN THE PROTECTED AREAS OF GEORGIA

**Abstract:** *The most important natural factor in the development of tourism is the protected areas. Together with the natural wealth of the country, the protected areas preserve the memory of the historical and cultural heritage. Tourism should become a guarantee not only of economic strength, but also of environmental protection. The strength of properly managed tourism is to create a limit for the sustainable development of the environment. Ecological tourism appears as a tool for sustainable development of the natural environment. The principles of sustainability are interesting and valuable, challenging all sectors in the tourism value chain. To ensure sustainability, priority is given to the development of tourism products based on the natural environment, sustainable use of natural and ethno-cultural resources, raising environmental awareness and effective management. It is believed that sustainable development should be economically beneficial, socially just and environmentally friendly. The paper discusses the sustainable importance of protected areas valuable for the tourism sector, sustainable benefits of ecotourism destinations, sustainability problems, theoretical and practical aspects of sustainable planning of protected areas. We studied the issue of regional localization in achieving sustainable development, the degree of ecological integration, progressive trends, the role of the local population and government in the process of sustainable planning. It is important that the network of protected areas system should be expanded in parallel with the growing number of visitors. At the regional level, ecocivilization and long-term sustainability must be ensured only by an ecological understanding of the complex interaction between environmental, economic, political and social/cultural dimensions and by planning and management based on sustainable principles. In the work, we also defined the issue of the need to establish the threshold norm of "throughput" for the use of protected areas. The standards developed by the International Organization for Standardization were sought, which contribute to the fulfillment of the goals of sustainable development, from this point of view the standard ISO 18065 is interesting, which defines the avoidance of pollution, negative impact, ecological safety, etc. during increased travel in nature. Sh.*

**Keywords:** *protected areas, sustainable tourism, visitor, national.*

**JEL classification:** *Z32, Q01, Q56.*

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## საქართველოს დაცულ ტერიტორიებზე ეკოლოგიური ტურიზმის მდგრადი განვითარების ასპექტები

**აბსტრაქტი:** ტურიზმის განვითარებაში უმნიშვნელოვანეს ბუნებრივ ფაქტორს დაცული ტერიტორიები წარმოადგენს. ქვეყნის ბუნებრივ სიმდიდრესთან ერთად დაცული ტერიტორიები ინახავენ მეხსიერებას ისტორიული და კულტურული მემკვიდრეობის შესახებ. ტურიზმი არა მხოლოდ ეკონომიკური სიძლიერის, არამედ გარემოს დაცვის გარანტად უნდა იქცეს. სწორად მართული ტურიზმის ძლიერი მხარეა გარემოს მდგრადი განვითარებისთვის ლიმიტის შექმნა. მიიჩნევა, რომ მდგრადი განვითარება უნდა იყოს ეკონომიკურად ხელსაყრელი, სოციალურად სამართლიანი და გარემოსთვის დამზოგავი. ეკოლოგიური ტურიზმი გვევლინება, როგორც ბუნებრივი გარემოს მდგრადი განვითარების ინსტრუმენტი. თანამედროვე ეტაპზე მეტად საყურადღებოა მდგრადობის პრინციპები, რომელიც ტურიზმის ღირებულებების ჯაჭვში არსებულ ყველა სექტორს გამოწვევების წინაშე აყენებს. მდგრადობის უზრუნველყოფისთვის პრიორიტეტი ენიჭება ბუნებრივ გარემოზე დაფუძნებული ტურისტული პროდუქტის განვითარებას, ბუნებრივი და ეთნოკულტურული რესურსების მდგრად გამოყენებას, გარემოსდაცვით ცნობიერების ამაღლებას და ეფექტურ მენეჯმენტს. ნაშრომში განხილულია ტურიზმის სექტორისთვის ღირებული დაცული ტერიტორიების მდგრადი მნიშვნელობა, დანიშნულების ადგილების მდგრადი სარგებელი, მდგრადობის პრობლემები, დაცული ტერიტორიების მდგრადი დაგეგმვის თეორიული და პრაქტიკული ხასიათის ასპექტები. შევისწავლეთ მდგრადი განვითარების მიღწევის საქმეში რეგიონალური ლოკალიზების საკითხი, ეკოლოგიური ინტეგრაციის ხარისხი, პროგრესულ ტენდენციები, მდგრადი დაგეგმვის პროცესში ადგილობრივი თემის და ხელისუფლების როლი. მნიშვნელოვანია, რომ ვიზიტორთა მზარდი რიცხვის პარალელურად უნდა ხდებოდეს დაცული ტერიტორიების სისტემის ქსელის გაფართოვება. რეგიონულ დონეზე ეკოცივილიზაცია და გრძელვადიანი მდგრადობა უზრუნველყოფილი უნდა იყოს მხოლოდ გარემოსდაცვითი, ეკონომიკური, პოლიტიკური და სოციალურ/კულტურული განზომილებებს შორის კომპლექსური

ურთიერთქმედების ეკოლოგიური გაგებით და მდგრად პრინციპებზე დაფუძნებული დაგეგმვითა და მენეჯმენტით. ნაშრომში ასევე განვსაზღვრეთ დაცული ტერიტორიების გამოყენების, „გამტარუნარიანობის“ ზღვრული ნორმის დადგენის საჭიროების საკითხი. მოძიებული იქნა სტანდარტიზაციის საერთაშორისო ორგანიზაციის მიერ შემუშავებული სტანდარტები, რომელიც ხელს უწყობს მდგრადი განვითარების მიზნების შესრულებას, ამ თვალსაზრისით საინტერესოა სტანდარტი-[ISO 18065](#), რომელიც განსაზღვრავს ბუნებაში გაზრდილი მოგზაურობის დროს თავიდან ავიცილოთ დაბინძურება, უარყოფითი ზეგავლენა, ეკოლოგიური უსაფრთხოება და ა. შ.

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** დაცული ტერიტორიები, მდგრადი ტურიზმი, ვიზიტორი, ეროვნული.

**JEL კლასიფიკაცია:** Z32, Q01, Q56.

## INTRODUCTION.

Environmental protection and rational use of natural resources in the development of the country's tourism is one of the primary problems, the present and future of the planet, the successful development of economy and culture, the life and well-being of the present and future generations are connected with the correct solution. Greening of tourism is one of the leading trends in tourism. Today, less attention is paid to the problems of ecological sustainability of tourist destinations. Ecological tourism is defined as one of the varieties of natural tourism, which brings together people traveling for scientific and cognitive purposes. The field of interest of this category of tourists is the environment, observing it and protecting it. Ecotourism products are relatively untouched nature and the pleasure of observing it, ancient cultural monuments and any natural or man-made values. The problem of tourism development is very important at the modern stage. The main point is that the concept of sustainable tourism is no longer just a buzzword – it is an essential component of responsible travel.

In the world of tourism, the terms sustainable tourism and ecotourism are used interchangeably. Despite the close connection, each of them has a small but important nuance. The concept of ecotourism implies more compassion and commitment on the part of travelers. Sustainable tourism is the functional obligation of society to ensure the protection and preservation of the environment for future generations. These conditions are not simply economic and political factors and need to be reinforced through decision-making. It is necessary to understand what an ecologically sustainable environment means for the development of tourism, what role ecotourism plays in this matter, as one of the main components of the sustainable development of tourism. According to the ecotourism strategy, by 2030, Georgia will be the leading ecotourism country in the Caucasus region, which, taking into account its rich living culture and nature, as well as high-

quality services, will provide ecotourism offers in all four seasons. (Ecotourism strategy of Georgia, 2020-2030).

Georgia's rich and untouched natural beauty, unique bio-diversity, micro-climate, puts the country in a good position to grow the nature-oriented travel market. The existence of a network of national parks and other protected areas undoubtedly contributes to the development of tourism in Georgia. There are many monuments of history and culture in the national parks, which are organically combined with natural landscapes, most of them are ancient and located in valuable forest massifs (Gigauri, Supatashvili, 2007). We consider the definition of ecotourism and the use of unique places rich in natural factors for sustainable purposes to be an important task. In the presented work, we discussed the sustainable ecotourism importance of protected areas, valuable resources for the tourism sector. Both ecological and theoretical-practical aspects of sustainable planning. The paper focuses on issues of regional localization of sustainable objectives in protected areas, capacity, statistics of visitors to protected areas and received revenues.

**Literature review.** The study of protected areas of Georgia has a long history. G. has important works in this direction. Gigauri "The Resort Importance of Georgian Forests" (1960). It is interesting c. Gigauri and A. Supatashvili's monograph "Resort-recreational-tourist significance of Georgian forests and the basics of farming in them" (2007). Also A. Kikodze and R. Gohelashvili's monograph "Protected Territories of Georgia" (2007). M. Metreveli's Guide to Environment and Ecotourism Management (2012), which includes natural resources, protected areas, environmental policy, principles and characteristics of nature tourism, is worth noting. Gogelia's scientific study "Formation of strategies for the development of ecological tourism", in this paper attention is paid to the key role of protected natural areas in the strategy of ecological tourism due to their specific natural-cultural characteristics. It is interesting that researcher N. Drezheshvili's monograph Tourismology, where the philosophical aspects of tourism research and study are discussed. In the research process, the reports of the Agency of Protected Areas of Georgia, statistical publications of the National Statistical Service of Georgia, the principles of IUCN on "tourism and visitor management in protected areas", the concept of protected and other conservation areas, and others were discussed.

**Methodology.** Quantitative and qualitative research methods were used in the research process. Statistical data analysis. Analytical material presented in open sources was processed, literature, publications were analyzed within the framework of desk research, data was collected, findings were discussed.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.**

Georgia ranks 56th out of 165 countries in the ranking of the implementation/progress of sustainable development goals. There are significant challenges in the direction of sustainable development in the country - "ecological challenges (SDG 14-15) are important among them. (Sustainable Development Report, 2021).

Implementation of sustainable development goals at the local government level in the regions will help to eliminate poverty, ensure universal well-being, promote climate change and environmental protection issues, etc. In this process, the role of the local government is very important. In addition to direct participation in the localization process, self-governing units themselves determine the

local agenda, must develop priority programs and be involved in the implementation of goals and monitoring of their performance. (Turashvili, Nikuradze, 2020).

Unfortunately, at present, humanity is facing global problems of providing natural resources, one of the main reasons of which is the modern way of life (consumption-oriented principle). As a result of non-rational use of resources, nature can exhaust its self-recovery ability, especially for forest massifs, the degradation of which leads to a number of negative ecological consequences.

The development of ecological tourism in protected natural areas is an important issue that ensures both the country's economic situation and the protection and preservation of the natural environment. The concept of ecotourism includes: natural environment, ecological and cultural sustainability, education, local and national income provision. The World Tourism Organization has recognized ecotourism as a key direction for effective poverty reduction, environmental protection and conservation, and no less important for promoting sustainable development. (Nature-based tourism, 2020).

"Agenda for the 21st century" in which the main principles and requirements of sustainable development were announced, should be the basis for the development of tourism in Georgia, since sustainable tourism: promotes the impact of tourism on the natural, cultural and social spheres; promotes the development of profitable local industries; Contributes to the diversification of the local economy, especially in rural areas where employment may be seasonal or casual in nature. (Grdzlishvili, 2024).

According to experts, ecotourism is the most fully consistent with the concept of sustainable development. Ecological tourism, especially in protected natural areas, can develop all its types. The existence of nature-based tourism depends on the functioning of ecosystems and the services they offer. There is no doubt that tourism cannot develop in the country without the system of protected areas. Today, protected areas play the main role in the protection of biodiversity and natural heritage of Georgia (and not only Georgia). In addition, protected areas are distinguished by their unique natural-aesthetic characteristics.

The history of the protection of natural areas in Georgia dates back to the 12th century. King Tamar issued an order to protect some areas. Five hundred years later, the "Collection of Laws" of Vakhtang VI mentions the territory of Koruli as an object of protection, it was forbidden to cut trees and walk, and the territory was protected by guards. In mountainous regions there was "Khat forests", where forest cutting and the use of pastures in these areas were subject to strict protection and constituted a typical nature reserve. Protected territories in Georgia were officially separated at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, in 1872, under the reserve regime. year Hunting reserves, botanical reserves, special purpose forests, where agricultural activities were almost prohibited. A private hunting reserve was established in Borjomi, a private hunting reserve was established in Lagodekhi, a special purpose reserve was established in Ajamet in 1896, Lagodekhi valley was declared a reserve in 1912, wood cutting, grazing and hunting were prohibited in the area. (Qiqodze, Gokhelashvili, 2007).

Currently, there are 100 protected areas of six categories in Georgia, covering 912,908 ha of the total area of the country and 13% of the territory of Georgia. (Sultanishvili, 2023). In Georgia, the categories of protected areas matching the international criteria, which are based on the



recommendations of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) have been legalized. Maintaining existing protected areas and creating new ones is important for several reasons:

- State reserve - strict protection of the territory, educational and Special permission to conduct non-manipulative studies;
- National park - ecosystem conservation, eco-education, eco-tourism development;
- Natural monument - conservation of natural features (protection of a small special area);
- Prevented - protection and preservation of nature through active management;
- Protected landscape - conservation of landscape and/or sea water and development of ecotourism;
- Multipurpose area Sustainable use of natural resources.

International support is of great importance in the development of protected areas. The year 2021 is noteworthy, when for the first time in the history of Georgia, 4 protected areas of Georgia: Kolkheti and Mtskheta national parks, Kintrishi and Kobuleti protected areas, were included in the UNESCO natural heritage list as "Kolkheti forests and wetlands". (UNESCO - World Natural Heritage Site In Georgia), it is a significant success that the territory of Machakheli has been granted the status of a protected landscape. Undoubtedly, the UNESCO World Heritage Site is a great achievement, but Georgia has the best opportunities to create a Biosphere Reserve, a form of territorial conservation that will create more opportunities to protect natural areas. The objectives of protected areas include: sustainable management of natural resources; protection and restoration of biodiversity; development of ecotourism; public relations and environmental education; law enforcement and rescue work; sustainable infrastructure development; Institutional strengthening, system development. (UNESCO - World Natural Heritage Site in Georgia).

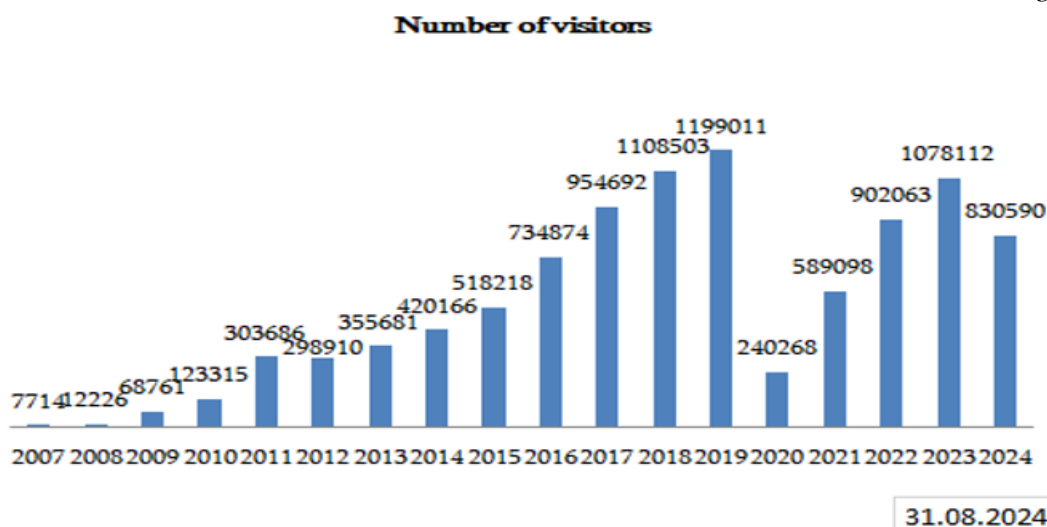
In the budget of 2023, financial resources of 18 million were invested for the development of ecotourism infrastructure, which provides for the design and construction of a network of hiking trails and accompanying recreational-tourist zones. In 2023, various projects will also be implemented in terms of raising ecotourism awareness. In 2023, a general plan for the development of ecotourism of 8 protected areas was developed, the donor is the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA): for the development of Tbilisi, Borjomi-Kharagauli, Pshav-Khevsureti, Algeti, Lagodekhi, Javakheti, Martvili and Okatse natural monuments and Mtskheta protected areas. From 2012 to 2023, 13 visitor centers were built in the protected areas, it is possible to use ecotourism services in the protected areas. (Protected Areas Agency, 2023).

The support of donor organizations is very important in terms of sustainable financing, the Caucasus Nature Protection Fund (CNF) is a financial supporter of 4,160,000 GEL in the form of a grant to protected areas. The Bank of Georgia supports the development of the protected areas of Borjomi-Kharagauli, Lagodekhi, Tusheti (national park and protected landscape), Vashlovani, Mtskheta, Javakheti, Kazbegi, Algeti, Kintrishi, Machakheli, Pshav-Khevsureti. (<https://nbg.gov.ge>). The value of the portfolio of grant projects of the Agency of Protected Areas in 2023 is unprecedented, amounting to 100 million GEL. In these projects, the support of the German Bank for Reconstruction and Development (KfW), the Caucasus Nature Foundation (CNF), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Swedish Government (SIDA), the Czech Development Agency, the European Union (EU), is particularly important. Support of USAID, World Bank, Global Conservation, WWF. (Sustainable Development Goals (Sustainable Development Goals-2030)).

The presence of protected areas in the regions has a positive effect on the local population living in the vicinity of the protected areas, the presence of protected areas contributes to the development of ecotourism in the region, which is an additional motivation for them to support the preservation of ethno-cultural traditions and to create various useful local products specific to the region and area. The role of ecotourism in protected natural areas is important for the protection of biodiversity. Biodiversity is also given economic value by ecotourism, therefore it is of some interest for the population to protect and preserve it, if we do not consider the fact that ecotourism, in turn, involves raising public awareness of the protection of the natural environment and biodiversity among them. Ecological tourism promotes the formation of a friendly attitude towards the environment and reveals a means of sustainable business development, where the local population receives economic benefits and preserves natural culture and values.

The main indicator in the assessment of the tourism sector is the dynamics of visits made by visitors. In Georgia, there are many activities in the direction of visiting nature. In 2023, 1,078,112 visitors were recorded in the protected territories of Georgia, which is 19% more than the data of 2022 (902,063 visitors) visited the territory of nature, landscape and reserve (Figure N1).

Figure N1.

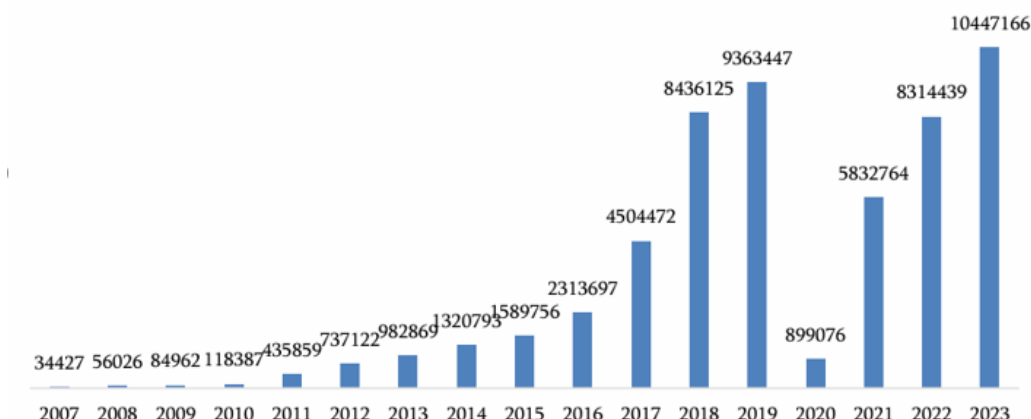


**Source:** <https://apa.gov.ge/en/statistika/vizitorta-statistika/vizitorta-statistika>

In 2023, the income received from ecotourism services amounted to 10,447,166 GEL, which is an increase of about 26% compared to the figure of 2022 (8,314,439 GEL). Figure N2.

Figure N2.

**Income from ecotourism services of protected areas by year**



Source: <https://apa.gov.ge/ge/angariSebi>

According to the 8-month statistics of visitors to the protected areas, compared to the same period last year, interest has increased most in canyons and caves. Navenekhevi Cave is a relatively new ecotourism facility and is characterized by rapidly growing interest from visitors. During the 8 months of 2024, compared to the previous year, a record increase of 33% was recorded in Navechavi cave. According to visitor statistics, among the 5 most visited protected areas are Prometheus Cave, Martvili Canyon, Sataflia, Mtirala National Park and Tsalki Canyon, which were visited by a total of 619,743 visitors, which is a 10% increase compared to the same period last year (National Agency for Protected Territories).

Buffer zones of national parks and protected areas can play an important role in the sustainable development of ecotourism for the following reasons: Protected areas can take on the management functions of planning, managing and monitoring ecotourism activities: Ecotourism is an effective means of environmental education and helps to direct people's attention to nature conservation ; Protected areas and the network of national parks include unique landscapes that have not been altered by human influence; National parks play an important role in the social and cultural life of the region; The development of ecotourism contributes to the development of the local economy, ensures the attraction of international attention and investments, and also creates new jobs (Gogelia, 2012).

The main principle of sustainable tourism is to limit the volume of tourism development or tourist flows in tourist destinations, for which it is necessary to determine the capacity and use limiting factors. "Throughput" is the level of use of the territory by visitors, which ensures a high level of their satisfaction with a negligible impact on resources. The forms of bandwidth are: tourist social bandwidth - the level, the excess of which causes a negative impression during the trip. Bandwidth defines the threshold density, or "threshold load". The "threshold load" is the level of



density, exceeding which causes irreversible damage to the landscape components. (Metreveli, 2012).

**Carrying capacity** This is a pre-developed complex measure that adjusts the "tolerance" of the area to the level of the complex indicator of impact on the area. Any environment, including a protected area (as a tourist product of ecotourism) has a maximum load limit, the overloading of which can lead to the destruction of ecosystems, and in exchange for material benefits, they can disturb the ecological balance. Therefore, capacity is of great importance in environmental protection and sustainable development of tourism.

Scientists have provided relevant recommendations that can be taken into account for protected areas with natural conditions, such as: the load on the tourist trail passing through the mossy forests can withstand up to 25 people/ha without significant damage; on pine paths - 15 people/ha; For birch and mixed forests, the permissible load is higher - 50 people/ha; 35 people/ha on moraine plains.

Innovative tourism management is increasingly focused on local destination management and sustainability. Scientists do not dispute that the destination is the core of tourism. Accordingly, it is easy to assess what importance is given to the sustainability of the destination, which is practically equal to the sustainability of tourism. Nevertheless, less attention is paid to the problems of destinations in general and their sustainability in particular. In order to achieve the sustainable development of tourism, the nature and volumes of tourism activities should take into account the carrying capacity of existing natural and artificial resources. A forest can combine a protective or conservation function only if it is in its natural state, because sustainability characterizes the forest in its natural-ecological conditions. Forest in Georgia not only accounts for maintaining unique biodiversity, but also performs social and environmental functions of state importance, supplies local residents with vital resources and provides welfare, poverty eradication and sustainable development of such sectors of economy as agriculture, energy and tourism. The need for forest protection is a globally accepted truth. Georgia is a signee of a number of international treaties and agreements, thus committing to ensure forest management according to sustainable principles (Assessment of the recreational potential of Georgian forests, (2016). Caucasus Environmental Organizations Network (CENN).

Uncontrolled, unplanned development of tourism often leads to an incalculable waste of resources and ultimately to the destruction of the landscape. Various international organizations should be involved in the process of developing the strategic vision of the national park community/destination and the process should be based on sustainable management principles, criteria and indicators. Tourism is required to meet high standards of responsibility in order to avoid negative impacts on the environment while competing.

The concept of protected areas developed in 2023 includes notable challenges related to the development of ecotourism: the development of tourism in protected areas is not fully in line with the IUCN principles of "Tourism and Visitor Management in Protected Areas". Among the main challenges related to the development of tourism in protected areas are the following:

- a) The impact of tourism development on protected areas is not assessed.

b) In the country, the vision and standard for the sustainable development of tourist infrastructure in protected areas of different categories are insufficiently formed, which prevents the introduction of correct practices for the development of ecotourism in protected areas.

c) There is insufficient mechanism for requesting the justification of the economic, social and ecological feasibility of the project during the planning of the tourist infrastructure in the protected areas.

This priority envisages bringing the development of ecotourism in protected areas into full harmony with the IUCN fundamental principle of "Tourism and Visitor Management in Protected Areas", according to which, in order for tourism in protected areas to be sustainable, it should primarily contribute to the long-term conservation of nature and ensure biodiversity. Maintain through appropriate visitor management (Leung, Yu-Fai, Spenceley, Anna, Hvenegaard, Glen, and Buckley, Ralf (eds.) 2018).

Accordingly, the concept implies the development of ecotourism in the protected areas of Georgia as a socially and ecologically responsible form of travel, which takes into account the interpretation and experience of nature and culture, and has a low impact on the environment. In such a case, ecotourism will contribute to the perception and knowledge of nature by the travelers, and at the same time to the appreciation of their natural and cultural values by the local population. (Protected and more Concept of Conservation Areas, 2023). Although new protected areas have been established in recent years and the total area has increased significantly, the number of visitors has increased, and an ecotourism strategy has been developed, but the set goal of creating a unified network of effectively managed, interconnected protected areas has not been achieved within the set time frame.

The ISO 18065 - standard is significant, nature travel is a growing direction of the tourism sector. From year to year, the number of people who prefer to relax in wild nature is increasing, although it is possible to pollute the environment and pose a threat to endemic plant and animal species, as well as to species included in the Red Book. The ISO-18065 standard allows us to avoid such cases. It provides for the conservation, understanding and appreciation of natural and cultural values through information, education and heritage interpretation and minimizing the potential impacts generated by tourism. The utility plan must include the following: a) public utility zoning scheme; b) environmental impact monitoring; c) capacity; d) the maximum number of visitors to the facilities; e) criteria for evaluating the suitability of tourist activities; f) permitted and prohibited activities; g) expected, proposed and prohibited visitor behavior; h) recreational management; j) use, information and interpretation of visitor experience and visitor profiles (such as surveys, questionnaires, etc.); accessibility considerations; k) security; m) waste, cleaning and maintenance; n) outsourcing; n) Information and communication.

Sustainable tourism is based on quality, improving the quality of life of the host community and protecting the environment. Sustainable tourism requires the continuity of the resources on which tourism is based. Also, the continuity of the host community's culture and visitor support. Finally, sustainable tourism also implies balance, it is tourism that balances the needs of the host, the guest and the host environment. It is necessary to implement effective institutional mechanisms for the management of natural resources for sustainable use and to develop appropriate management plans for each protected area.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ecological tourism in Georgia is moving forward, but there is still a lot to be done. The nature of Georgia, together with the cultural heritage, represents the most important wealth of the country. To date, no unified sustainable policy conceptual document has been developed in this regard, reflecting the role and importance of protected and other conservation areas.

It is important to research ethnoculture in local communities in protected areas, to study the traditional Georgian ethnoculture formed as a folk tradition over time, to implement state projects to protect the outstanding resource potential of cultural heritage. Also, the development of small businesses, family ecological hotels. It is important to increase the level of environmental awareness of the local community. to form a global vision (planning and development should not be done in isolation); Stakeholder engagement (not just local control but collaboration); Long-term planning (putting forward a long-term vision where every action is self-sustaining). The ratio of sustainability and quality (the quality of the destination or product, as well as the tourist taking care of the preservation of the environment); The economy should strive for sustainable growth and higher productivity.

Thus, the most important factor in achieving sustainable development is the development and management of tourism in such a way that it does not harm the natural environment. In the correct planning of tourism from an ecological point of view, one should be aware of the potential impacts that follow the development of tourism. It is necessary to formulate a waste management strategy and plan in protected areas, to develop and implement service quality standards with an understanding of sustainability goals. Economic progress, social justice and protection of the natural environment must be balanced. The principle of sustainability includes the ecological, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, so it is important to balance all three directions in order to guarantee the long-term sustainability of tourist destinations and protected areas. Georgia's unique biodiversity is one of its calling cards, it significantly defines the country's ecological needs and distinguishes it from many other countries and regions of the world.

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