

Studying the principles of sustainable tourism development in Karabakh

Irada Khusainova^{1*}, *Afet Ayat Gasimova*¹, *Ilaha Isa Mammadova*², *Sergey Yekimov*³, *Jamala Fizuli Tahirzade*¹, and *Ramida Farrukh Khalilova*¹, and *Bobur Sobirov*⁴

¹Azerbaijan Technological University, 103 Shah Ismail Khatai Ave., AZ 2011 Ganja, Azerbaijan

²MICE& Travel company, Babak ave. 1131 – 10 Baku, Azerbaijan

³Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Kamycka 129, 16500, Praha - Suchdol, Czech Republic

⁴Samarkand branch of Taskent State University of Economics, 140100 Samarkand city, Uzbekistan

Abstract: This article explores the fundamentals of the sustainable development concept, where the dominant factor is the creation of harmony in the functioning of the nature-society system. This system is designed to maintain the functioning of processes and components within the socio-economic framework without altering the natural subsystem. Such preservation of the organization of the natural subsystem is necessary to ensure a comfortable human habitat and the fulfillment of their material and spiritual needs. In recent times, Azerbaijan has emerged as a country showing intensive growth in the tourism sector. Viewing the situation through the lens of commitment to sustainable development goals, it becomes evident that a paramount objective is to ensure a healthy lifestyle and well-being for people of all ages. On the other hand, the list of goals also includes fostering continuous, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. To achieve sustainable development goals, tourism must undergo change and redirection. The system of sustainable tourism development contributes to vital tasks in the social sphere: raising the living standards of the population, increasing local employment, and preserving natural and cultural heritage.

1 Introduction

The main objective of the historical-philosophical study of tourism is to refine the philosophical evolution of travel. Wandering philosophers, intimately acquainted with economic activities, customs, and traditions of various peoples, utilize this observational experience in their philosophical works, diaries, public lectures, and other reflections. Ancient philosophers traveled extensively to comprehend the world, discover truth, and depicted this experience as an event and an integral part of human life.

Over time, the idea of human responsibility for nature conservation gave rise to forms of tourism such as nature tourism and ecotourism. Therefore, everyone should be concerned with the preservation and conservation of the natural environment, comprising ecosystems

* Corresponding author: x-irada@mail.ru

and rich biological diversity. Participants in the tourism process and professionals working in the tourism industry should initiate their activities in "challenging" ecological zones, i.e., particularly vulnerable natural areas and reserves, after implementing specific restrictions.

In recent years, tourism has been enriched by the concept of sustainable development. Issues of sustainable development have been addressed since 1987. This idea was first articulated by Gro Harlem Brundtland, a member of the International Commission on Environment and Development. At that time, sustainable development was defined as "...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" [1].

A little later, at the conference held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, a comprehensive program of international cooperation aimed at achieving high-quality environmental and economic outcomes was signed [2].

The foundation of the sustainable development concept lies in creating harmony within the functioning of the nature-society system, which is designed to sustain the operation of processes and components within the socio-economic system without altering the natural subsystem. Preserving the organization of the natural subsystem is essential from the standpoint of maintaining a comfortable human habitat and enabling the fulfillment of their material and spiritual needs.

During the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002, the following documents were adopted: the "Political Declaration" and the "Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development." These documents precisely illustrate the relevance of the issue and the strengthening of the sustainable development concept [3].

2 Literature Review

It is evident that tourism is growing worldwide not only at a rapid pace but also accompanied by negative consequences at the destination. Hence, the forefront of attention is focused on the issue related to the fact that mass forms of tourism must bear responsibility for them [4]. Currently, there is a perception that mass tourism is a "negative influence on the environment" [4], and therefore, controlling the volume of tourism can manage the situation [5]. Moreover, tourism typically occurs in places with a "fragile" environment, such as mountains and coastlines. The heightened interest in alternative forms of tourism, especially in developing countries, is increasing every day. The quest for a different vacation experience is not a new phenomenon. It has been systematized by authors like Cohen [6] and Plog [7]. Ecological concern has taken the forefront, focusing on the negative consequences of mass tourism on significant and delicate natural environments.

This has led to the emergence of a more delicate form of tourism, the goal of which is to minimize ecological (as well as social, cultural, and economic) costs and maximize benefits. It has been given various names—responsible, soft, green—but perhaps the most useful is "sustainable" tourism, which can serve as an alternative to mass tourism and its associated negative consequences [8]. A small number of individual travelers is preferable to a large number of tourists, who often travel in groups. Local accommodation and decision-making contribute to a slow, controlled growth that remains within the hosting area's capacity to absorb it without harming its culture or natural environment. These factors contrast with the rapid pace of large-scale development, often favored by multinational companies that dominate in various directions and frequently lead to sharp cost increases.

Bramwell [9] defines green tourism as tourism that enhances the authenticity of local cultures, operates under the control of the host community, provides quality employment for the local population, and retains economic benefits within the local economy. Green

tourism is employed as an antidote to mass tourism, although it is often asserted that a phased approach is necessary to achieve this. Gradual development is recommended to make it easier for the target destination to absorb changes.

Another author [10] actively investigates issues related to the potential of tourism to make a significant contribution to the nation's development in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. In another study [11], the author examines the economic and cultural impact of tourism on a region, particularly focusing on its marketing aspects.

In the article [12], it is asserted that the issue of sustainable development through the lens of the tourism industry is particularly relevant for countries with transitional economies. At the same time, these countries attempt to achieve better development indicators both in economic and non-economic spheres through tourism. Authors [13] investigate the potential of tourism to achieve Sustainable Development Goals through surveys of respondents based on specific characteristics. They consider three types of tourism impacts: economic, socio-cultural, and sustainable environmental development at three stages of tourism development (involvement, development, consolidation). This idea of distinguishing three impact components of tourism is supported by many scholars who define "sustainable" by combining social, environmental, and economic definitions [14]. Authors of the article [15] refer to tourism as a tool that has proven its effectiveness in achieving sustainable development in rural areas. The study provides a comprehensive assessment of the impact of rural tourism on the ecology of suburban territories.

In the article [16], the authors employ content analysis of scientific literature to attempt to prove that tourism is a factor of sustainable development, the utilization of which leads to a tangible improvement in the quality of life in the host country. Other researchers explore the concept of responsible tourism. Responsibility is considered by scholars as an evident parameter of the tourism industry and is a fundamental factor determining tourists' behavior and their perception of the tourism product [17]. In the article [18], it is cited that there are several models of tourism industry development, primarily determined by the level of a country's development: the organic development model, the traditional non-intervention model, the enclave tourism development model, and the center-to-periphery model. The latter is characteristic of Kazakhstan and most countries in the former Soviet Union.

An interesting study is presented in [19], where the authors explore the nuances of applying the concept of socially responsible business in the tourism sector and define the benefits of its achievements for society. The article asserts that all tourism stakeholders are potentially capable of strategically considering social responsibility conditions and exerting a significant positive influence on the socio-economic status of the regions where they are situated and operate. In the work [20], specific tourist groups with varying attitudes toward sustainable development principles in tourism are analyzed. The author's approach to studying tourism development allows for building a model of the interrelation between the examined tourist values, economic development, and sustainable development in the tourism sector. Issues of sustainable development in the tourism sector are also investigated in the works of Ukrainian scholars, who conduct targeted research in active regions of Ukraine that attract a large number of tourists [21].

Thus, to achieve the goals of sustainable development, tourism must undergo changes and reorientation. There is a pressing need to search for and implement new forms and means to facilitate the development of tourism.

3 Methods and Research Methodology

The article is founded on analytical and empirical research methods and methodologies.

4 Discussion of Results

Responsible tourism (and responsibility) is not seen as another form of tourism but rather as a set of "responsible principles" that should underpin any form of tourism, including sustainable tourism.

Another characteristic is that responsible tourism brings benefits to society. Planning at the local community level will be based on a culture that requires the collaboration of all stakeholders involved in the decision-making process in the tourism sector.

Local government officials collaborate with local citizens, professionals, and businesspeople to ensure that everyone can participate in decision-making processes that benefit the environment and society. Additionally, specific principles of responsible tourism are aimed at visitors, ensuring that they are informed about the fragile environment.

In any case, an appropriate form of territory development should be based on a "cost-benefit" approach. The social costs and benefits approach for analyzing the economic consequences of tourism development in the area can be useful for planning and providing the foundation for development. For instance, balanced development of recreational activities with both low and high impact levels could contribute to maximizing the well-being of the host community, protecting the environment, and satisfying the visitors.

Recently, Azerbaijan has become a country that demonstrates intensive development in the tourism sector. According to official data from the Institute of Economics of the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan, in 2018, the tourism sector was one of the most important sectors of the economy [22]. It encompasses not only a large number of directly tourism-related enterprises but also businesses indirectly involved in the process of providing tourism services. Looking at the situation from the perspective of commitment to sustainable development goals, it's worth noting that one of the primary and vital objectives is to ensure a healthy lifestyle and well-being for people of all ages.

On the other hand, the list of goals also includes promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.

The situation of sharp contraction in the tourism sector, which employs a significant number of labor resources, negatively affects not only Azerbaijan but also other countries and has repercussions on various sectors of the economy and the economy as a whole [23].

The system of sustainable tourism development contributes to important social goals: raising the standard of living for the population, increasing local employment, and preserving natural and cultural heritage.

When we talk about sustainable development in the tourism sector, we are referring to the necessity of creating and maintaining stability in biological and physical systems. A significant emphasis is placed on preserving the abilities of natural systems and habitats to adapt to changes, rather than keeping them in an ideal state.

Indeed, international tourism has become a crucial player in the global economy, and the issue of sustainable development has gained significant relevance for it.

Absolutely, the tourism sector should undoubtedly be engaged in such development, as it is considered one of the promising and rapidly growing sectors of the global economy according to modern world statistics. It's important to note that tourism plays a significant role in providing employment opportunities and generating income for the population.

When discussing the responsibility of individuals for the preservation of nature in the tourism industry, it refers to types of tourism such as nature tourism and ecotourism. According to these concepts, it is important to care for the protection and preservation of

the natural environment, including ecosystems and rich biodiversity. Participants in the tourism process and professionals in the field of tourism should agree to specific restrictions on activities in environmentally sensitive areas, that is, in ecologically vulnerable territories and protected areas.

Sustainable tourism is a way of managing tourism projects in which everything that is good and valuable remains the same for the generations that come after us.

Sustainable tourism will be achieved when the social-cultural sphere, ecology, and economy effectively work together.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines sustainable tourism as "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities." In other words, sustainable tourism is achieved when everyone is satisfied.

Tourists are satisfied because their vacation provides them with a great experience. The local population is content because tourists help them earn income, contribute to their cultural development, and do not disrupt their way of life. The environment is content because it remains unharmed, and the natural resources endure for generations to come. Businesses are satisfied as they earn money through all these processes.

Many wonder what type of tourism can be sustainable. These can include family vacations, ecotourism, adventure tourism, cultural tourism, and business tourism. Any type of tourism can be sustainable if it meets specific criteria that support sustainable development.

There is an official organization responsible for sustainable development standards. It's the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), established with the support of the United Nations. Their website features a list of criteria that can be used to determine whether a specific travel project is sustainable.

The criteria of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) were developed to ensure a common understanding of sustainable tourism. The GSTC Destination Criteria represent a minimum that any tourism destination should strive to achieve. They are organized around four main themes: sustainable management; socio-economic impacts; cultural impacts; and environmental impacts, and are applicable to the entire tourism sector. The latest revision of the GSTC Destination Criteria took place in 2019 and was based on two rounds of consultations with stakeholders [2].

To create a truly sustainable travel business, one must start with oneself. Firstly, examine your own office - whether everything there meets the standards of sustainable development. This includes aspects such as employee salaries, reducing the use of disposable plastics, and other factors.

The second level is tourism products and supply chains. Here, it's important to consciously choose suppliers for the products offered to users. The third level involves social initiatives. This includes supporting the local community and engaging in environmental projects, such as organizing beach clean-ups by company employees.

Sustainable tourism helps address multiple issues. One of them is overtourism. Overtourism occurs when a city or destination becomes overwhelmed with too many tourists. On the other hand, undertourism is when a destination is eagerly anticipating tourists, but they do not arrive [24].

Therefore, one of the goals of sustainable tourism is to balance these trends. The aim is to have a sufficient number of tourists everywhere without overwhelming the destinations. Each city should determine its own limitations regarding maximum capacity.

Thus, the concept of sustainable development is seen as a new framework in which economic, social, and environmental needs are considered within a unified definition, with all three aspects integrated into the decision-making process. In other words, the goal of the

concept is to achieve economic efficiency while simultaneously preserving the natural environment and achieving social equity. The primary objective is to satisfy human needs and aspirations.

To transform nature-based tourism into truly sustainable tourism, it is essential to learn how to manage these complex and conflicting trends. This involves avoiding or mitigating negative consequences and maximizing positive impacts as much as possible.

As it is known, twenty percent of Azerbaijan's territory was under occupation. During the Second Karabakh War, these territories were liberated, but unfortunately, over the course of thirty years of occupation, these areas suffered significant damage, degradation, and ecological destruction.

Today, the state faces an important task of restoring natural landmarks, flora, and fauna, and finding more rational methods for the development of sustainable tourism in Azerbaijan, particularly in Karabakh.

Currently, sustainable tourism, as a new promising socio-economic strategy, represents a comprehensive concept for the development of all segments, directions, and types of tourism activities (including traditional mass tourism as its dominant aspect), while simultaneously shaping a new form of humanitarian enlightenment through a holistic and systematic understanding of life, ecological thinking (respectful and responsible attitude towards nature and the local socio-cultural environment). As noted, sustainable tourism can contribute to the economic development of any country, where the protection and restoration of the surrounding natural environment become increasingly significant criteria for societal progress.

The improvement of sustainability worldwide has always been and remains a relevant topic, driving the implementation of new technologies and innovations across various aspects of human life, including the hospitality industry. Environmental innovations encompass new concepts, products, technologies, and production methods that involve processes and systems leading to the reduction of environmental pollution or other negative impacts resulting from human economic activities.

In this context, one of the emerging trends in the hotel sector is the construction of eco-friendly hotels, also known as eco-hotels. An eco-hotel is an environmentally certified accommodation facility with the goal of minimizing its own negative impact on the environment and contributing to its improvement. The concept of an eco-hotel as an innovative approach in the hospitality industry comes with distinct features that set it apart from traditional hotels, including the use of environmentally friendly building materials, contributions to environmental preservation, and the utilization of renewable energy sources (such as solar and wind power).

The construction of eco-friendly hotels typically takes place in areas far from industrial zones and landscapes with minimal alteration of natural surroundings. In modern conditions, only those structures built with minimal use of synthetic construction and finishing materials can be considered truly eco-friendly. Utilizing alternative energy sources is among the noteworthy features of eco-friendly buildings.

Sustainable problems are among the priority areas of international cooperation. Among these problems, we note the problem of preserving biological diversity, in particular, the conservation of endangered species of fauna and flora.

A quarter of the territory, the cradle of Azerbaijan, Shusha, is covered with forests and possesses rich flora and fauna. Mother Nature generously bestowed her blessings upon this land. The fauna of Shusha is as rich as its flora. The presence of forests and mountains, along with abundant natural resources, provides shelter for birds and animals. As a result of the occupation of Karabakh and the seven adjacent regions, significant ecological damage was inflicted. In particular, the wildlife of this area suffered greatly. Before the occupation,

more than 70 species of animals listed in the "Red Book" found refuge there. Currently, there is no accurate information about the state of the wildlife in this region.

The concept of sustainable development in this region should be considered as a new concept in which economic, social, and environmental needs are united in a common definition, and all three forms are integrated into the decision-making process. In other words, it can be said that the goal of the concept is economic efficiency linked with environmental conservation and achieving social justice, while its primary task is to meet the needs and desires of people.

It should also be noted that sustainable development encompasses two main interconnected concepts: the concept of needs, including priorities (essential for the well-being of the poorest populations), and the concept of limitations (imposed by technology and the organizational state of society), which is based on the ability of the environment to meet the current and future needs of humanity.

As international tourism has been playing a significant role in the global economy recently, the issue of sustainable development within this context is of utmost importance. The tourism sector, as a crucial industry, must actively participate in sustainable development. According to modern global statistics, it is recognized as one of the promising and rapidly growing sectors in the global economy. Tourism also plays a crucial role in providing employment opportunities and generating income [25].

Another concept for the sustainable development of tourism in the liberated territories involves the necessity to create and maintain the sustainability of biological and physical systems. The primary focus is on preserving the ability of natural systems and habitats to adapt to changes, rather than preserving them in their original state. The system of sustainable tourism development serves important goals within the social sphere: improving the quality of life for the population, increasing employment opportunities for local residents, and safeguarding natural and cultural heritage. The successful development of regional tourism depends on considering existing factors that either enhance or slow down the pace of domestic tourism development and contribute to its integration into the market of international tourism services.

In conclusion, it can be inferred that the successful development of regional tourism depends on considering existing factors that contribute to either the acceleration or deceleration of local tourism development and its integration into the international tourism market. "Sustainable tourism" is a knowledge-intensive resource with a range of challenges at the global, national, and regional levels, making the proposed issue highly relevant and in demand within the scientific community in the contemporary era.

References

1. Gizatullin Kh. N. The concept of sustainable development: a new socio-economic paradigm. *Social sciences and modernity*. 1998, No. 5, p. 124–130.
2. Magometov A. A. Historical and geographical features of sustainable development of the North Caucasus. Sustainable development of mountain territories: problems and prospects: collection of scientific works. (works Publishing house SOGU, 1998)
3. Zakharov V. M. Sustainable development. "The future we want." Human and nature. Center for Environmental Policy of Russia. (M., 2015)
4. Cooper, C.P., Ozdil, I. From mass to responsible tourism. "The Turkish Experience". *Tourism Management*, Dec. 13, 1992. **(4)**, p.p. 377-386.
5. Wheeler, B. Is progressive tourism appropriate? *Tourism Management*. 1992. **13 (1)**, p.p. 104-105.

6. Cohen, E. Towards a sociology of international tourism. *Social Research* 39, 1972. p.p. 164-182.
7. Plog, S.C. (1972). "Why Destination Areas rise and fall in popularity?" in P.E. Murphy. *Tourism: A Community approach*. Methuen. London
8. Fotis Kilipiris and Stella Zardava. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* , **44** (2012), p. 44 – 52
9. Bramwell, B. (1990). Green Tourism in the Countryside. *Tourism Management*, 11(2) p.p. 41-42.
10. Alexis-Thomas, C. An examination of issues related to tourism and health and well-being as a sustainable development goal by tourism providers in Tobago. *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*. 2020.
11. Wang, J. *Marketing and Management of Innovations*, 2017, **3**, 53-59.
12. Vucetic, A. Š. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 2018, **20(3)**, 317-325.
13. Lee, T. J., Han, J. S., & Ko, T. G. Health-Oriented Tourists and Sustainable Domestic Tourism. *Sustainability*, 2020, **12(12)**, 4988.
14. Mazilu, M., Dumitrescu, D., & Gheorgheci, S. Romanian tourism industry and sustainable development. *Journal of Environmental Protection and Ecology*, 2017. 18(2), 623-631.
15. Martín, J. M., Salinas Fernandez, J. A., Rodríguez Martín, J. A., & Jimenez Aguilera, J. D. D. *Sustainability*, 2017, **9(10)**, 1692.
16. Kabote, F., Mamimine, P. W., & Muranda, Z. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 2017, **6(2)**, 1-12.
17. Saarinen, J. *Tourism Geographies*, 2018, **20 (2)**, 337-340.
18. Aimagambetov, E., Bugubaeva, R., Bespayeva, R., & Tashbaev, N. Model of sustainable development of tourism industry in Kazakhstan (regional perspective). (2017).
19. Hatipoglu, B., Ertuna, B., & Salman, D. Corporate social responsibility in tourism as a tool for sustainable development. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*. 2019.
20. Adongo, C. A., Taale, F., & Adam, I. Tourists' values and empathic attitude toward sustainable development in tourism. *Ecological Economics*, 2018. 150, 251-263.
21. Shcherbakova, N. State and Trends of Sustainable Development of Tourism in Ukraine and the World. *Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism (JEMT)*, 2018. 9(08 (32)), 1712-1724.
22. Allahverdiyeva, L.A. Formation of competitive tourism in Azerbaijan. *Institute of Economics of ANAS, Baku*, 2017.
23. Bilan, Y., Lyeonov, S., Lyulyov, O., & Pimonenko, T. Brand management and macroeconomic stability of the country. *Polish Journal of Management Studies*, 2019. 19, 61-74
24. Ponomareva I. Yu. Sustainable development of tourism and its influence on social processes. *News of Tula State University. Humanitarian sciences*. 2010, p. 209–215.
25. Trofimov E. N. *Fundamentals of tourism*. M.: Federal Agency for Tourism, 2014, 384 p.