

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM: THE CASE OF AZERBAIJAN

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Abstract. In the present stage the tourism industry, as one of the spheres of economic activity, for its successful development should be based on a diversified complex, united under the general concept of this industry. Important components of this complex are the development of transport infrastructure, the hotel industry services and entertainment, etc. The paper deals with the problems of development of the tourism industry in Azerbaijan in the frame of the "Road Map" appointed by the government of Azerbaijan.

Keywords: tourism, tourism resources, state program on tourism development, state regulation.

AZƏRBAYCANDA TURİZMİN DAYANIQLI İNKİŞAFI

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Xülasə. İndiki mərhələdə turizm sənayesi, iqtisadi fəaliyyət sahələrindən biri kimi, uğurlu inkişafı üçün bu sənayenin ümumi konsepsiyası altında birləşdirilmiş şaxələndirilmiş kompleksə əsaslanmalıdır. Bu kompleksin vacib komponentləri nəqliyyat infrastrukturunun inkişafı, mehmanxana sənayesi xidmətləri və əyləncə və sairədir. Məqalədə Azərbaycan hökuməti tərəfindən təsdiq edilmiş "Yol xəritəsi" çərçivəsində Azərbaycanda turizm sənayesinin inkişafı problemləri müzakirə olunur.

Açar sözlər: Turizm, turizm ehtiyatları, turizmin inkişafına dair Dövlət proqramı, dövlət tənzimləməsi.

УСТОЙЧИВОЕ РАЗВИТИЕ ТУРИЗМА В АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНЕ

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Резюме. На современном этапе индустрия туризма, как одна из сфер экономической деятельности, для успешного развития должна опираться на многоотраслевой комплекс, объединенный общей концепцией этой отрасли. Важными составляющими этого комплекса являются развитие транспортной инфраструктуры, услуг гостиничного бизнеса и развлечений и т.д. В статье рассматриваются проблемы развития индустрии туризма в Азербайджане в рамках «дорожной карты», утвержденной правительством Азербайджана.

Ключевые слова: туризм, туристические ресурсы, государственная программа по развитию туризма, государственное регулирование.

1. Introduction

This work is focused on the topic: "The development of tourism in the Republic of Azerbaijan: problems and perspectives." This topic is relevant, as tourism in Azerbaijan is one of sectors in the economy that has been developing rapidly in recent years. Comparatively small "country of lights" in its territory is located at the junction of Europe and Asia, making it very attractive for development of tourism business. Nowadays, revenues account for slightly more than 10% in the national economy. Every year the number of tourists increases

by 15-20%. Every year, more than 600 thousand people rest in resorts of Azerbaijan and more than 2 million tourists are served by the excursions.

The main goal of this work is presentation of tourist and recreational potential in the Republic of Azerbaijan, its problems and prospects for development. Azerbaijan has great potential. In Azerbaijan, nature and people have created optimal conditions for any kind of recreation. Here you can find 9 of 11 climatic zones, so flora and fauna are amazingly varied. On the territory of the country are located 13 nature reserves. The special value of Azerbaijan is cultural and historical heritage.

This work consists of one chapter, which discusses tourist and recreational resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan, that is, cultural and historical attractions, resources of cities, and also it includes natural resources and attractions of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

There are a lot of mineral sources on the territory of Azerbaijan. Therefore, the main balneal resorts that are popular in Azerbaijan and also received world-wide fame are discussed in the work. The primary task in light of the above is identification and analyze of problem's causes in development of the tourism industry and perspectives for future development. The solution of this problem within framework of present work was carried out on basis of the analysis and consideration of practice in functioning of main tourist centers of Azerbaijan Republic.

2. Problems of tourist outflow

Data on the analysis of statistical indicators from 2006 to 2013 speak of issues in the tourism sector of Azerbaijan. According to statistics from the State Committee of Azerbaijan Republic, the influx of tourists into republic from 2006 to 2012 has steadily increased. But in 2013, statistics captures the actual collapse of the industry. In just one year, the tourist flow declined more than half - 23,440 to 10,605 people.

Describing this fact, it can be assumed that presented sample of data was conducted in the years preceding the global world crisis, occurred in 2012. Moreover, sharp decrease in tourist flow could be affected by decline in the number of tourist days per person, compared with previous years. For instance, if you take the same 2012 and 2013, reduction will be 135838 and 58173, respectively. However, upon closer inspection, this fact is not tenable, since the analysis of state in the tourism sector reveals a number of quite serious problems in development of this industry.

The most serious of such problems are the following:

1. The inadequate representation of tourist potential of the country. In recent years, many different international events have been held in Azerbaijan. During this period, it is important to systematically organize presentation of the country to attract foreign tourists.

2. Lack of qualified staff. The surveys conducted in the tourism industry, especially in regions, showed a lack of qualified staff and the inadequacy of their market needs. Since

2009, demand for specialists began to grow, but according to statistics, in 2014 only 10% of those who work directly in the tourism sector (42025 persons) received proper education.

Although young people like to work in the tourism sphere, seasonal factor and lack of material and technical base of tourist education institutions are reasons for reducing level of professionalism in this field.

3. Improperly organized tourist propaganda among local population. The unawareness among residents of regions with tourist potential leads to the absence of relationships with guests (especially foreign ones).

4. The imbalance of price and services. The main goal of the entrepreneurship is profit. This is one of basic obstacles of tourism in Azerbaijan. For facilitation of the process, it is advisable to encourage small and medium businesses and create favorable conditions for them. In particular, these are cheap hotels, hostels and guest houses.

The relevant government agencies can provide financial and technical support (participation in staff training, seminars, and so on) to improve the quality of service.

5. The inadequate information about tourism services in the regions. Delivery of advertising and tourism products to the consumer via the Internet is widespread in the international practice. Foreign agencies, hotels and other organizations, associated with tourism, use the Internet more than in regions of Azerbaijan.

6. Low level of cooperation among government, commercial and non-profit organizations. From the point of view of tourism development, the interaction in Azerbaijan is low.

7. Non-access to tourist organizations in regions of the country, as well as to the international information networks.

In addition to these problems, the issue of increasing level and quality of tourist services remains acute. The solution of this issue was highlighted in the state program for tourism development in Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijan Tourism Institute was opened under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic in 2006. However, despite recent improvements, the problem was solved only partially, as evidenced by the ranking of tourist attractiveness.

The solution of the identified problems can be offered on the basis of the analysis in foreign experience, from which it is necessary to highlight several measures that can be used at supporting development of tourism in Azerbaijan:

- 1) The development of creative tourism. Given the characteristics of different regions of the country associated with local cooking, folk art and so on, the country has high growth potential;
- 2) preparation and implementation of successful promotional activities to attract tourists. Despite the fact that some work is already being done in these areas, additional measures are needed (cooperation with tour operators operating in foreign countries;

the introduction the tourist attractions of Azerbaijan on board — scenic brochures; creation of information centers, related to tourism, airports and railway stations); holding the international tourism exhibitions;

- 3) audio guides in different languages should be created in museums and other cultural sites. The tickets must be available for purchase online;
- 4) in the construction of hotels in the tourist regions of the country, preference should be given to 3-4 star hotels. World experience shows that on business trip people stay at 5 star hotels, and tourists prefer 3-4 star comfortable hotels [3; p.639].

It is worth noting that some of such proposals have already been implemented. Currently, advertising and information activities have been improved: tourist exhibitions are regularly held, information center opened at Baku airport. State Tourism Agency created, intended to be important step towards solving management problems in this area.

Analyzing development perspectives of tourism industry in the republic, it can be noted that Azerbaijan Republic has favorable, prosperous geographical position. The republic is regional leader of the South Caucasus because it is economically developed and politically significant country in the world. Currently, Azerbaijan is known for oil and gas resources; however, we should not forget about tourism potential of the state.

Azerbaijan tourism is one of sectors in the economy, rapidly developing in recent years. There are 11 climatic zones on our planet, and 9 of them are represented on the territory of Azerbaijan, ranging from subtropics to beautiful Alpine meadows.

Moreover, except the natural resources, more than 6 thousand cultural monuments are represented in the country. Each of them amazes human imagination, it allows you to touch the past and explore culture of the country. Not every state includes such cultural benefits.

In my opinion, given the nature of country's tourism resources and state of the infrastructure, particular interest for development of inbound tourism can present some of its views:

- cultural and educational tourism;
- business tourism;
- specialized tourism (beach, ecological, event, hunting and fishing, skiing and so on).

One of the most popular types of vacation is beach holiday. A large number of local or domestic tourists prefer to relax on the beach. This direction is most developed in the north of the country. The southern regions have great perspectives and opportunities in this area of tourism. However, there development is constrained by lack of hotel and other infrastructures.

Cooperation with the international organizations allows involving worldwide experience and financial resources to the process of creating new tourism infrastructure in Azerbaijan. For instance, under the United Nations program by the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Tourism of Azerbaijan was allocated 240 thousand dollars as aid of sustainable development in domestic tourism. Azerbaijan is member of the International Tourist

Association “Eurasia”, one of the important directions of activity that is development of the transcontinental tourist route “The Great Silk Road”, carried out under the auspices of WTO in cooperation with UNESCO. The project is implemented with technical support from WTO and funded by various international foundations and national organizations. Azerbaijan is actively involved in regional TRACECA project linking Europe and Asia.

3. Conclusion

Despite the existence of large number of the issues, associated with development of the tourism industry, it should be noted that this industry in the republic has actively developed practice of problem solving of the industry; it shows high efficiency of cooperation of society and government in Azerbaijan. The revealed potential is demonstrated by legislative changes, caused by crisis in this sector. It is clear that if this trend continues in the future, it will create good conditions for development of tourism and the increase in tourist flow and, consequently, cash money flows into the country. The prospects for development of the tourism industry are huge country in Azerbaijan. For this, the country has all necessary resources for development of virtually any tourist destination. Subject to competent approach to solving the existing problems of making economically verified decisions on the development of the infrastructure and services, Azerbaijan has every chance to take its place among the world leaders in the tourism industry.

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