

CURRENT DEVELOPMENT MEGATRENDS AND PERSPECTIVE DIRECTIONS OF GREEN TOURISM IN AZERBAIJAN

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Current Development Megatrends and Perspective Directions of Green Tourism in Azerbaijan

Green tourism has emerged as a key pillar of sustainable development and an important instrument for economic diversification in many countries. This study examines the contemporary development of green tourism in Azerbaijan, identifies the global megatrends influencing its evolution, and assesses the country's future strategic directions within the framework of sustainable regional development. The research employs a comparative and qualitative methodological approach. Global trends in green tourism development are compared with Azerbaijan's national experience, with particular attention given to differences in growth rates between mass tourism and ecotourism, socio-economic outcomes across regions and countries, and institutional approaches to sustainable tourism development. Qualitative thematic analysis is applied to evaluate the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental impacts of green tourism, focusing on employment generation, income diversification, community-based tourism, cultural heritage preservation, and environmental awareness. The findings indicate that green tourism in Azerbaijan demonstrates positive development dynamics and strong alignment with global sustainability trends. The country's rich natural landscapes, cultural heritage, and supportive policy initiatives create significant opportunities for expanding eco-friendly and nature-based tourism. Green tourism contributes to employment creation, poverty reduction, regional development, and environmental protection, strengthening its role as a catalyst for sustainable economic growth. However, challenges such as uneven regional development, limited international promotion, insufficient environmental certification standards, and potential environmental and social risks remain. Addressing these constraints is essential to ensure the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of green tourism in Azerbaijan.

Keywords: Azerbaijan, tourism, green tourism, sustainable economy.

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Гусейнова С. М., Гулієв А. Сучасні мегатренди розвитку та перспективні напрямки зеленого туризму в Азербайджані

Зелений туризм став ключовим елементом сталого розвитку та важливим інструментом економічної диверсифікації в багатьох країнах. Це дослідження розглядає сучасний розвиток зеленого туризму в Азербайджані, визначає глобальні мегатренди, що впливають на його еволюцію, та оцінює майбутні стратегічні напрямки країни в рамках сталого регіонального розвитку. У дослідженні використовується порівняльний та якісний методологічний підхід. Глобальні тренди розвитку зеленого туризму порівнюються з національним досвідом Азербайджану, при цьому особлива увага приділяється відмінностям у темпах зростання між масовим туризмом та екотуризмом, соціально-економічним результатам у різних регіонах і країнах, а також інституційним підходам до розвитку сталого туризму. Для оцінки соціально-економічного, культурного та екологічного впливу зеленого туризму застосовується якісний тематичний аналіз, який зосереджується на створенні робочих місць, диверсифікації доходів, туризмі на базі громад, збереженні культурної спадщини та екологічній обізнаності. Результати дослідження показують, що зелений туризм в Азербайджані демонструє позитивну динаміку розвитку та високу відповідність світовим трендам сталого розвитку. Багаті природні ландшафти країни, культурна спадщина та підтримувальні політичні ініціативи створюють значні можливості для розширення екологічного та природного туризму. Зелений туризм сприяє створенню робочих місць, скороченню бідності, регіональному розвитку та захисту навколишнього середовища, його роль як каталізатора сталого економічного зростання посилюється. Однак залишаються такі проблеми, як нерівномірний регіональний розвиток, обмежене міжнародне просування, недостатні стандарти екологічної сертифікації та потенційні екологічні та соціальні ризики. Вирішення цих обмежень є важливим для забезпечення довгострокової стійкості та конкурентоспроможності зеленого туризму в Азербайджані.

Ключові слова: Азербайджан, туризм, зелений туризм, сталий розвиток економіки.

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Introduction. Green tourism, as an integral component of sustainable development, has become increasingly significant in national tourism strategies worldwide. In recent years, Azerbaijan has demonstrated a growing commitment to expanding environmentally responsible tourism practices, driven by global ecological priorities, rising tourist demand for nature-based experiences, and national policy initiatives aimed at diversifying the non-oil economy.

The country's rich natural landscapes – including mountainous regions, forest ecosystems, mineral springs, protected areas, and national parks – provide a strong foundation for the development of green tourism as a competitive sector.

The evolution of green tourism in Azerbaijan reflects several global megatrends: the shift toward eco-friendly travel behavior, the emergence of rural and agritourism as economic drivers, digitalization of tourism services, and increasing public awareness regarding environmental protection. At the same time, Azerbaijan's strategic programs, such as the expansion of specially protected natural territories, infrastructure improvements in rural regions, and community-based tourism initiatives, have accelerated the transition toward sustainable tourism models.

Despite these achievements, the sector still faces challenges, including limited international promotion of eco-destinations, uneven regional development, and the need for greater environmental certification standards. Understanding the current megatrends and identifying perspective directions is therefore essential for advancing a comprehensive and competitive green tourism framework in Azerbaijan.

This study aims to analyze the contemporary development dynamics of green tourism in Azerbaijan, assess the driving megatrends shaping its progress, and outline the future strategic directions necessary for strengthening sustainability, economic diversification, and regional development within the national tourism sector.

Methodology. The global development dynamics of green tourism were compared with similar trends in Azerbaijan. Specific attention was given to comparing analyses of Growth rates of mass tourism vs. ecotourism. Analyses of Socio-economic outcomes across different regions and countries and institutional approaches to green tourism development. Qualitative analysis was used to evaluate the socio-economic consequences of green tourism, community-based tourism models and sustainability, environmental awareness, and cultural impacts. The analysis followed thematic coding, focusing on categories such as employment, income, social capital, gender, cultural heritage, and environmental behavior. All empirical and theoretical findings were synthesized to derive the Global megatrends in green tourism, Azerbaijan-specific development opportunities and Policy implications and strategic recommendations

Literature Review. The concept of sustainable and green tourism has evolved significantly over the past decades, reflecting growing concerns over environmental degradation, social equity, and the long-term viability of tourism destinations. Early contributions by Bramwell and Lane [2] laid the theoretical foundation for

sustainable tourism by emphasizing the need to balance economic growth with environmental protection and social responsibility. Their work highlighted sustainability as a dynamic and adaptive process rather than a fixed development model.

Subsequent research has expanded this theoretical framework by focusing on the practical implementation of sustainability principles in tourism. Buckley [3; 4] argues that while sustainable and ecotourism have gained strong conceptual acceptance, their real-world application often faces institutional, financial, and governance-related constraints. His studies underline the growing gap between sustainability rhetoric and tourism practices, particularly in developing and transition economies.

Ecotourism, as a specific form of green tourism, has been extensively examined in the literature. Fennell [5] and Honey [7] emphasize that ecotourism is fundamentally linked to conservation, environmental education, and local community benefits. These authors stress that successful ecotourism requires strong regulatory frameworks and stakeholder cooperation to prevent environmental overuse and cultural commodification.

Community involvement and socio-economic empowerment are recurring themes in green tourism research. Scheyvens [10] demonstrates that ecotourism can serve as an effective tool for empowering local communities when economic benefits are equitably distributed and decision-making processes are inclusive. This perspective is particularly relevant for rural and peripheral regions where tourism can act as an alternative source of income and employment.

Recent empirical studies have increasingly focused on environmental awareness and behavioral change among tourists. Samal [9] shows that higher levels of environmental consciousness significantly influence tourists' preference for green travel options, reinforcing the importance of education and information in promoting sustainable tourism demand. Similarly, Fudurich and MacKay [6] highlight the growing role of environmental certification and green practices in accommodation services, especially within the sharing economy.

The role of green tourism within the broader framework of the green economy has also received scholarly attention. Toubes and Araújo-Vila [12] provide a comprehensive review of tourism's contribution to green economic growth, noting that tourism can support environmental objectives while generating employment and regional development if managed sustainably.

In the context of Eastern Europe and post-Soviet countries, researchers underline the importance of institutional capacity and regional planning. Beidyk [1] and Humeniuk [8] examine green and rural tourism as instruments of sustainable regional development, emphasizing their potential to reduce rural poverty and preserve cultural heritage. Paniuk [13] further confirms that ecological tourism can support territorial sustainability when integrated into national development strategies.

Studies focusing on Azerbaijan remain relatively limited. However, Huseynova S. M., Rzayev S. S. [11] provide empirical evidence of a positive relationship between tourism development and economic growth in Azerbaijan, highlighting the sector's macro-

economic importance. National statistical data from the State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan [14] and UNWTO [15] indicate a steady increase in tourism activity, suggesting favorable conditions for the expansion of green tourism initiatives.

Findings and Discussion. The development of the tourism sector in the world has gained unprecedented momentum in terms of quantity in recent decades. While international tourist trips were measured in tens of millions in the 1960s, more than 1.5 billion international tourist trips were already recorded in 2019. However, this growth occurred mainly in the form of mass tourism - large group tours, charter trips, beach resorts, etc. Since the end of the 20th century, the dynamics of the growth of qualitatively new

forms of tourism have become noticeable. In particular, the ecotourism and sustainable tourism segments have begun to expand rapidly. According to the World Tourism Organization [15], in the 1990s, ecotourism was one of the fastest growing sectors of the tourism industry, with an annual growth rate of up to 20%. Some sources even reported that in the early 2000s, the share of nature-oriented tourism within total tourism reached 15–20%. This trend continues today. For example, according to market research, the global ecotourism market was worth approximately \$180 billion in 2019, and this figure is projected to more than double by 2025. Table 1 shows the growth rates of the global ecotourism market in recent years.

Table 1

Growth in the volume of the global ecotourism market (estimated figures)

Indicator	2010	2019	Forecast for the end of 2025
Ecotourism market size, US\$	100 billion	180 billion	300+ billion
Annual growth rate of total tourism	~4%	6%	3-4% (forecast)
Annual growth rate of ecotourism	~10-12%	Around 15%	10-15% (forecast)

Source: compiled based on UNWTO reports and market research from different years [15]

As can be seen from Table 1, the growth rate of the ecotourism (and green tourism in general) segment has been significantly higher than the growth rate of overall tourism in the last decade. This indicates that there is a qualitative change in tourists' tastes and travel preferences – more people are choosing trips focused on nature, cultural heritage, authentic experiences, and are trying to reduce the environmental impact of their trips. For example, according to one study, the majority of tourists surveyed stated that they prefer to use environmentally responsible services, even at the cost of paying more. This increase in demand has led to the emergence of a number of new tourism destinations around the world or the introduction of new concepts to traditional destinations.

When explaining the dynamics of green tourism development, it is useful to consider separately the main directions that make up it. The concept of green tourism in a broad sense encompasses several specific types of tourism – ecotourism, rural and agrotourism, adventure tourism, responsible tourism, sustainable urban tourism, etc. Each of these directions has had its own dynamics.

Rural tourism and agrotourism are also important areas of green tourism. These types of tourism involve relaxing in a rural environment away from city life, getting acquainted with local traditions, and sometimes participating in agricultural work. Rural tourism, especially in European countries, has expanded since the 1990s and has been supported by state programs. For example, in Italy, France, and Spain, staying on farms under the name “agriturismo” has become popular among tourists. Concepts such as plateau tourism and ecological village houses have also come to the fore in Turkey. This trend has not gone unnoticed in Azerbaijan - in recent years, tourism routes combining rural life and nature have been created in regions such as Guba, Gabala, Sheki, and Zagatala. According to the Azerbaijan Tourism Bureau, dozens of rural tourism routes have been formed in our country in the 2020s, and village houses and family guesthouses have been made accessible to tourists.

One of the important directions of green tourism is adventure tourism and active forms of tourism. This includes various activities such as mountaineering, hiking (trekking), cycling

tours, river trips, bird watching. Adventure tourism has also been developing rapidly in recent years - people are looking for different and exciting experiences than standard group tours. This direction intersects with green tourism, as adventure tours are often held in natural environments, national parks, and participants adhere to nature conservation rules. For example, in 2018, the global adventure tourism market value was reported to be around \$586 billion, and an annual growth rate of more than 10% is predicted [14]. Interest in adventure tourism is also growing in our country – especially in mountainous areas such as Shahdag and Tufandag, skiing, hiking and camping tourism are developing. In the summer of 2023, more than 15 mountain hiking routes were officially presented to tourists in different regions of Azerbaijan, which indicates the expansion of green tourism infrastructure.

It is important to separately highlight the dynamics of the development of green tourism in our country. Fig. 1 presents some indicators of the general development trends of tourism in the Republic of Azerbaijan. These indicators help to understand how the basis for the development of green tourism has changed.

Fig. 1 shows that Azerbaijan has seen significant growth in its tourism sector over the past decade. The number of foreign tourists more than doubled from 2008 to 2019, approaching 3 million. Of course, the majority of this growth is concentrated in Baku and other cities, but the share of tourists visiting the regions is also gradually increasing. The record number of tourists in 2017 (approximately 2.7 million) coincides with the period when tourism was declared a priority for the national economy [14]. During this period, there was a significant increase in tourist flows, especially from the Middle East and the CIS countries. This overall growth created the necessary basis for the development of green tourism, as the increase in the total number of tourists also increases the demand for various types of tourism.

The second indicator in the table is the ratio of specially protected natural areas (including national parks, state nature reserves, etc.) to the country's territory. This figure shows the success of Azerbaijan's environmental policy during the years of independence. If in the early 2000s only 5% of the country's territory was under protected status, by the end of the 2010s this figure had more than doubled and exceeded 10%. In particular, starting from 2003,

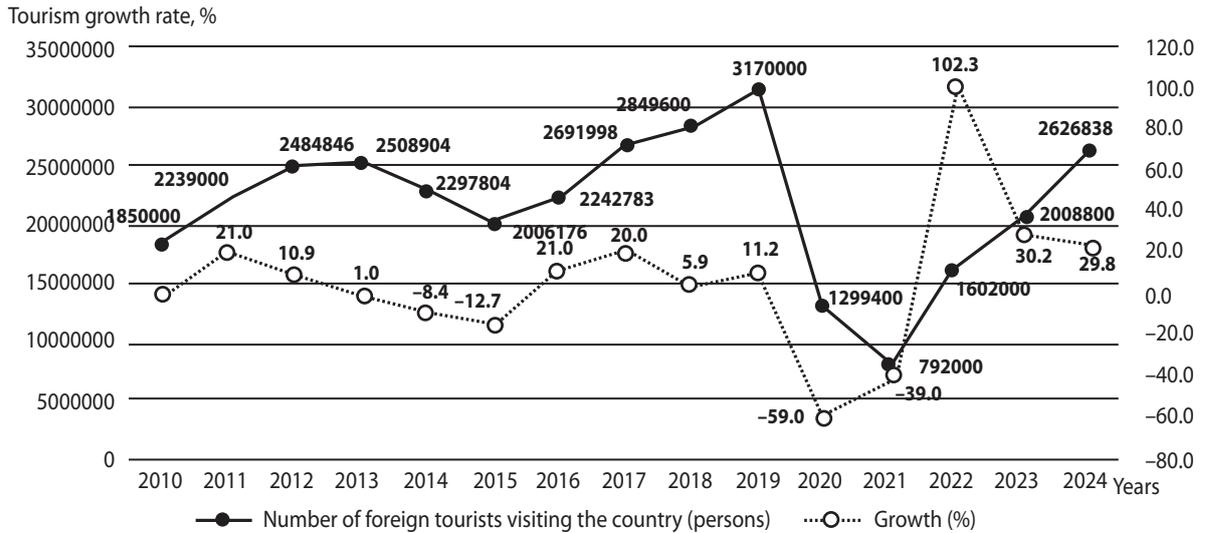


Fig. 1. Dynamics of some indicators of tourism development in Azerbaijan

Source: Compiled based on data from the State Statistical Committee and the State Tourism Agency [14].

national parks have been created one after another. Fig. 2 presents the years of creation of national parks in Azerbaijan, which reflects the dynamics of the expansion of green tourism infrastructure.

As can be seen from Table 1 10 national parks were established in Azerbaijan between 2003 and 2025. The largest national park is Shahdag National Park, which covers an area of more than 130 thousand hectares and covers the southern slopes of the Greater Caucasus mountain range. The recently established Gizilaghaj National Park is the first marine national park aimed at protecting the unique wetland ecosystem and marine waters on the coast of the Caspian Sea. The creation of these national parks plays a fundamental role in the formation of the infrastructure of ecotourism and green tourism in the country. Thus, national parks not only protect nature, but also perform educational, tourism and scientific research functions. Ecotourism routes and visitor

centers are already operating in a number of national parks. For example, Goygol National Park has been receiving thousands of domestic and foreign tourists in recent years – tourists flock here to admire the magnificent scenery of Goygol Lake and go hiking. Special tours are organized in Shirvan National Park for observing gazelles. These facts show that Azerbaijan's green tourism potential is gradually being realized and the development dynamics are positive[14].

Overall, the dynamics of green tourism development worldwide indicate that this sector has ceased to be a niche market and is becoming one of the main tourism trends. While the number of international tourist trips in 2018 exceeded 1.4 billion, a significant part of these trips – according to some estimates, about 20% – covered nature-based tourism activities [15]. This is a very large number and is growing. Although the pandemic has caused a gen-

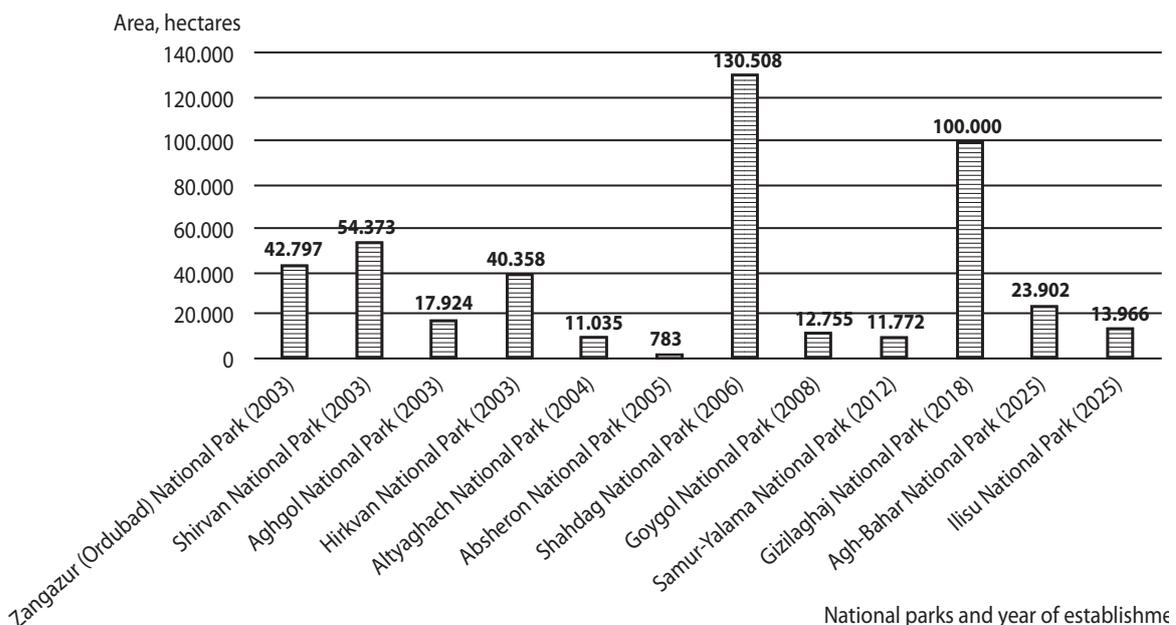


Fig. 2. Establishment of national parks in Azerbaijan and the areas they cover

Source: compiled by the author based on [14]

eral stagnation in the tourism sector in recent years (2020-2021), experts predict that the demand for green tourism will increase even more rapidly during the recovery period. Because the pandemic has strengthened the trends of people returning to nature and preferring outdoor recreation.

As for Azerbaijan, the dynamics of the development of green tourism in our country is being formulated as an integral part of the general tourism strategy. The "Strategic Roadmap" approved in 2016 noted the development of specialized types of tourism, including ecotourism and rural tourism, as one of the leading directions. Within the framework of this strategy, a number of projects have been implemented in recent years: ecotourism routes have been opened in state reserves, tourist information centers have been established in the regions, and tourism trainings have been held for local communities. In particular, there are plans to create a "green tourism" infrastructure in parallel with the "green energy" concept in the liberated Karabakh and East Zangezur regions. For example, the opening of the first ecotourism routes in Karabakh in a test mode in 2022 is among the steps taken in this area. All this shows that the development of green tourism in Azerbaijan is supported by both natural and political-economic drivers and is a dynamic process.

Based on the above, it can be concluded that the development dynamics of green tourism have a strong positive trajectory at the global level. Green tourism is becoming widespread due to changes in tourist demand, sustainable development policies of states, and innovative adaptation of the tourism industry. Both the number of participants and diversity in the main directions – ecotourism, rural tourism, adventure tourism, and responsible tourism – are increasing. These general trends are also reflected in Azerbaijan: our country is attracting more and more ecotourists, the network of national parks is expanding, and alternative forms of tourism are emerging in the regions. However, there is still work to be done to realize the full potential of green tourism – for example, strengthening marketing and promotion, implementing quality standards, improving statistical accounting, etc. These issues will become clearer in the following sections, in the context of analyzing the socio-economic consequences of green tourism.

The development of green tourism has a number of significant impacts not only on the tourism industry itself, but also on society and the economy as a whole. The analysis of these impacts, that is, the assessment of socio-economic consequences, is very important in terms of understanding the practical value of the green tourism concept. In general, the socio-economic consequences of tourism can include both positive and negative impacts. Below, the main positive (beneficial) consequences of the development of green tourism and possible negative (undesirable) impacts are analyzed separately.

Let's look at the economic outcomes first. The economic benefits of green tourism are evident in several ways. The first is the creation of new jobs and increased employment. The tourism sector is generally a labor-intensive sector – a wide range of professions are required to serve tourists, from hotels to transport, catering, guiding, and souvenir production. Green tourism, especially in the regions, is a source of new jobs, as it revitalizes small businesses and family businesses.

The expansion of tourism in the mountainous and rural regions of our country means the creation of job opportunities for the younger generation in their birthplace. For example, on the tourism routes operating in the Guba-Khinaliq direction, local residents work as guides, hosts (homestay service), and transport drivers. This indirectly affects the reduction of migration from rural areas to cities and increases the economic activity of the regions.

According to the State Statistical Committee [14], between 2015 and 2019, the number of people employed in the service sector in the regions of Azerbaijan most visited by tourists (Gabala, Guba, Gusar, Sheki, etc.) increased by an average of 25-30%, which can be explained by the employment opportunities created by tourism.

The second economic impact of green tourism is the direct financial inflows and increased income levels for local communities. In traditional mass tourism, most of the revenue is often distributed among large tour operators and international companies, with little percolating into the local economy. Green tourism – especially community-based tourism models – ensures that a significant portion of this revenue remains with the local population. According to a study conducted on the Indonesian island of Bali, green tourism initiatives have been able to increase household incomes by 35–40% at the neighborhood level. This is a very significant indicator. The study notes that in the Ubud region, ecotourism activities (eco-village guesthouses, community-led tours, etc.) have dramatically increased neighborhood incomes, and this increase has reduced the dependence of many families on agriculture, minimizing the risk of poverty. There are many such examples around the world: for example, in Latin America, Costa Rica currently has one of the highest per capita incomes in the region, thanks to its income from ecotourism. This directly demonstrates that green tourism, under appropriate management conditions, is very beneficial in terms of economic efficiency.

The economic benefits of green tourism can also be observed in the case of Azerbaijan. In particular, there is a noticeable increase in the income of families engaged in rural tourism. For example, after several families in the village of Ilisu in the Gakh region started providing homestay services, their annual income increased by an average of 20-30% (local unofficial data, 2019). Although such cases may seem small-scale, they contribute to improving the living standards in rural areas in general. On the other hand, green tourism activities also provide foreign exchange inflows to the country, which is positive in terms of overall economic balance. According to the World Tourism Organization, income from international tourism accounted for approximately 10% of Azerbaijan's export revenues in 2019. A significant part of this figure belongs to the non-oil sector, including green tourism services.

When assessing the socio-economic consequences of green tourism, it is necessary to pay special attention to social impacts. The social consequences of tourism refer to changes in the lifestyle, cultural values, and social relationships of the local population. Green tourism is usually characterized by positive social impacts, because this model puts local communities at the center of tourism. Many studies show that green tourism serves to empower local communities. For example, after the implementation of a community-based dolphin watching tourism project in the Philippines, a sense of unity and self-confidence increased among the rural population, and women began to be involved in tourism cooperatives and take a role in decision-making. This shows that tourism, when properly directed, strengthens not only economic but also social capital.

Green tourism can also help preserve cultural heritage. As a result of the increased interest of tourists in local customs and traditions, these customs are often given new life. For example, in some villages in Turkey, traditional crafts (weaving, pottery, etc.) have been revived due to tourism, as tourists are interested in buying these products as souvenirs. In Azerbaijan, in regions such as Gabala and Lahij, the commercialization of crafts is also observed. For example, since tourists visiting the village of Lahij eagerly buy coppersmith products and woven carpets, local craftsmen are en-

couraged to continue this profession. This is an indirect social result of green tourism - the strengthening and promotion of cultural identity.

At the same time, the development of green tourism has a social consequence, such as increasing public awareness of environmental protection. Natural resources (forests, water bodies, national parks) that attract tourist flows are beginning to be considered more valuable by society. For example, the more serious public attention to the issue of gazelle protection in Azerbaijan coincides with the increase in tourist visits to the Shirvan National Park. The more people see and appreciate, the better they understand the importance of protecting nature. This is the “enlightening” social benefit of green tourism.

However, when talking about socio-economic consequences, we should also mention some negative impacts and risks. Al-

though green tourism promotes sustainable development, some problems can arise in case of mismanagement.

As can be seen from Table 2 although the socio-economic outcomes of green tourism are largely positive, there are also potential negative aspects that require careful planning. The vast majority of these negative impacts can be minimized by adhering to the principles of good governance, community participation and sustainability. For example, to counter the risk of commercialization of culture, it should be ensured that cultural programs organized for tourists are developed and implemented by local communities so that they have control over the process. At the same time, by adhering to the carrying capacity, the ecological load can be kept within the norm.

The active role of the state is also observed in Azerbaijan. In recent years, the State Tourism Agency has implemented proj-

Table 2

Socio-economic impacts of green tourism development (positive and negative aspects)

Type of impact	Positive effects (benefits)	Adverse effects (risks)
Economic impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opening of new jobs, increasing employment ▪ Increasing incomes of local communities, reducing poverty ▪ Economic diversification and revitalization in the regions ▪ Foreign exchange flow and contribution to the balance of payments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social injustice in the event of unequal distribution of income ▪ Dependence on the tourism sector (weakening of other sectors) ▪ Overexploitation of resources and disruption of long-term sustainability of income in the case of overtourism
Social impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Empowerment of local communities, increasing unity and activism ▪ Preservation and revitalization of cultural heritage ▪ Raising environmental awareness, education ▪ Improvement of living standards and social infrastructure (due to tourism revenues) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Risk of commercialization of culture and loss of authenticity ▪ Disruption of traditional lifestyles and unpleasant behaviors due to the influx of tourists ▪ In some cases, price increases (due to tourists) and increased living costs for the local population ▪ Inequality within the community (between income earners and non-income earners)

Source: prepared by the author based on the analysis of various sources

ects such as the creation of ecotourism routes, the construction of infrastructure in national parks, and the training of local youth as guides. In particular, steps taken to realize the potential of green tourism in the liberated territories (for example, the Hadrut-Jabrail ecotourism route project) promise positive results in both the social and economic spheres – this will, on the one hand, encourage settlement and employment in these regions, and on the other hand, increase the overall tourist attractiveness of the country.

In summary, we can say that the development of green tourism has multidimensional socio-economic impacts and, when properly managed, its benefits far outweigh its risks. Green tourism makes economic growth sustainable, distributes income fairly, promotes social development, and at the same time protects national cultural values and the environment. All these are the fundamental pillars of the concept of sustainable development. It is no coincidence that the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicate tourism as a means to achieve several goals – poverty eradication, decent work and economic growth, responsible consumption and production, protection of ecosystems, etc.

However, in reality, a number of challenges remain: lack of investment, sometimes poor tourism literacy of local communities, lack of market experience, international competitive environment,

etc. To solve these problems, continuous analysis and adaptation of strategies are needed. For example, the effectiveness of green tourism projects should be monitored, and a system of investing revenues from tourism in projects of local importance should be established. Only in this case will the socio-economic results of green tourism be completely positive in the long term.

In the international environment, there is also a search for how to measure social indicators. In the system of indicators proposed by the UNWTO within the framework of “Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism”, a special social block is allocated along with economic and environmental indicators; it includes indicators such as visitor satisfaction, the structure of jobs created for the local population, the impact of tourism on social services, as well as public participation in management. The same approach is also visible in studies assessing the sustainability of tourism in protected areas: for example, in a comparative analysis of national parks in Slovenia and Serbia, social indicators - the attitude of local residents to the park, their participation in decision-making structures, and the allocation of tourism revenues to community projects – are analyzed separately along with environmental and economic indicators [14]. Such methodologies can also be applied to Azerbaijan, but for this, both data collection systems must be

established and coordination between statistical bodies and tourism management must be strengthened, that is, the work must not remain only at the level of theoretical recommendations.

Finally, it is worth mentioning one point separately: social indicators are not only “reactive” measures that measure the outcome of green tourism, but also factors that shape the process itself. As the level of education increases and environmental awareness deepens, both the demand for green products from tourists increases, and local communities begin to develop more creative tourism products, as social capital strengthens, community-based tourism models become more sustainable, as gender equality increases, the distribution of economic benefits changes in a fairer direction, and as this cycle continues, it becomes clearer how multifaceted the socio-economic outcomes are.

Conclusion. It can be noted that the development of green tourism opens up promising socio-economic prospects for the Republic of Azerbaijan. The country's rich natural resources, ancient cultural heritage, and hospitable human capital form a strong foundation for the successful growth of this type of tourism. The theoretical and methodological analysis showed that the development dynamics of the green tourism sector are positive and, if properly directed, can both bring sustainable income to the national economy and improve the well-being of various segments of our society.

This study demonstrates that green tourism in Azerbaijan has significant growth potential and is increasingly aligned with global sustainability trends. The country's rich natural landscapes, cultural heritage, and ongoing policy initiatives provide a solid foundation for expanding eco-friendly and nature-based tourism.

Current trends indicate that green tourism contributes positively to employment, income diversification, poverty reduction, cultural preservation, and environmental awareness, confirming its role as a key instrument for sustainable regional development.

At the same time, challenges remain, including uneven regional development, limited international promotion, lack of standardized environmental certifications, and potential environmental and social risks. Addressing these constraints is essential to ensure the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of Azerbaijan's green tourism sector.

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