

Assessment of the impact of infrastructure on tourism development

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Abstract: This study assesses the role of infrastructure in the development of tourism in Azerbaijan. With significant improvements in transportation, communication, and utility services across the regions, the country's tourism potential has grown considerably. The research analyzes the impact of socio-cultural and physical infrastructure on tourism activity, particularly in post-conflict areas such as Karabakh. Using methods such as comparative analysis and observation, the study explores how restored historical and natural sites, modernized transportation, and improved service facilities contribute to regional economic development and tourist attraction. It also identifies remaining challenges in creating modern infrastructures and offers recommendations for enhancing tourism sustainability. The findings emphasize the necessity of state-supported infrastructure policies and strategic planning for the successful integration of tourism into Azerbaijan's broader economic framework.

Keywords: *infrastructure, tourism development, Azerbaijan, socio-cultural infrastructure, post-conflict regions, tourism policy*

INTRODUCTION

The socio-economic nature of tourism, the functionality of the territory, the field of research in this area and the relevant methodological aspects are being privatized. As we know, the main goal of the regional tourism object and its prospective value is to form scientific-methodological principles and the relevant field of research in the field of regulation and management of this area. Initially, the comprehensive provision of existing tourism is determined by the demand for this sector.

Today, the development of tourism in our country and increasing the use of existing potential affecting the development of this sector are one of the urgent problems. Although there are wide opportunities for the development of tourism, the full use of these opportunities is still at a low level. The results

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achieved, the dynamics of the growth of the number of tourists visiting our country indicate that there is a need for joint activities of the state and the private sector in this direction (1).

The restoration of historical, religious, cultural monuments existing in our country occupies one of the important places in state policy. Thanks to the attention of President Ilham Aliyev, great work has been done in the field of repair, restoration, and reconstruction of such facilities. Thus, in accordance with the Order signed by the head of state, the adaptation of the “Yanardagh” State Historical-Cultural and Nature Reserve to modern standards and the creation of new tourism infrastructure on its territory demonstrate the consistent nature of the work being done. The Heydar Aliyev Foundation, headed by Mehriban Aliyeva, also makes significant contributions to the work carried out in this direction. In addition, the adaptation of the “Yanardagh” Reserve to modern standards plays an important role in attracting tourists. The opening of the “Yanardagh” Reserve, which was thoroughly repaired and restored, took place on June 12, 2019 with the participation of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva. The reserve includes the natural monument of eternal flame, “Yanardagh”, as well as caves from the early primitive community period called “Gurd yusha”, healing sulfur springs, the still active Kyrmek mud volcano, Alidashi peak, Kardashi large natural rocks, Kyrmek valley, and an ancient mound (8).

After the tourism product and infrastructure are created, a set of measures aimed at putting the tourism product into operation or selling the tourism product (exhibitions, advertising, attending fairs, creating tourism information services for selling the product, printing booklets, brochures, catalogs, etc.) is implemented. Therefore, tourism activity should be regulated by the state.

For years, due to shortcomings in the infrastructure, tourism and social development could not develop as much as necessary. We hope that after the construction work in the zones liberated from occupation due to the II “Karabakh” war, the quality of life of the population of Azerbaijan will increase in the future (9).

For many years, the occupation of the Karabagh zone, which has been a popular tourist destination, had a negative impact on the development of the area. For this reason, foreign countries are reluctant to invest or travel to Azerbaijan due to the fact that it is an industrial area. However, as a result of the 44-day counteroffensive starting on September 27, 2020, the liberation of Nagorno-Karabakh, which is home to our country’s rich tourism resources, has created broad opportunities for foreign tourism companies to invest in our country (7, p. 5).

MATERIALS AND DISCUSSIONS

In recent years, Azerbaijan has been implementing important reforms in the direction of developing tourism, which is one of the components of the non-oil sector. Our country has wide opportunities for the development of this sector. Ensuring the development of tourism, which is the leading sector of the service sector, in accordance with world standards by taking advantage of the advantages of our geographical location, has been accepted as a priority. Therefore, in the current period when tourism development is in the spotlight, special attention should be paid to the effective use of tourism

potential in the regions and the creation of infrastructure that can ensure the development of tourism types, etc. Topical issues.

Infrastructure, one of the main factors affecting the development of tourism, is an economic sector that serves the operating non-production and production sectors. Tourism infrastructure takes into account the rules that are important for the normal operation of the tourism sector and the significant use of tourism resources. This includes a modern electronic Internet and communication network, airports, temporary accommodation for tourists, means of transport, parks offering various cuisines, entertainment centers, etc., cafes and restaurants, communication channels and information networks, recreation areas, shops selling souvenirs, etc.

One of the rapidly developing sectors of the economy in the modern world is tourism services. Over the past fifty years, the demand for tourism services in the world has been increasing year by year. This directly affects the economic, social and cultural life of tourism countries and their regions. Long-term experience confirms that tourism gives impetus to the diversification of the economy and leads to the development of the sectors serving it. The development of regions in our country and increasing the use of existing potential affecting the development of tourism in the regions remain one of the urgent problems. The socio-economic development programs of the regions implemented in our country during 2004-2023 have shown their positive impact on the development of tourism in the regions.

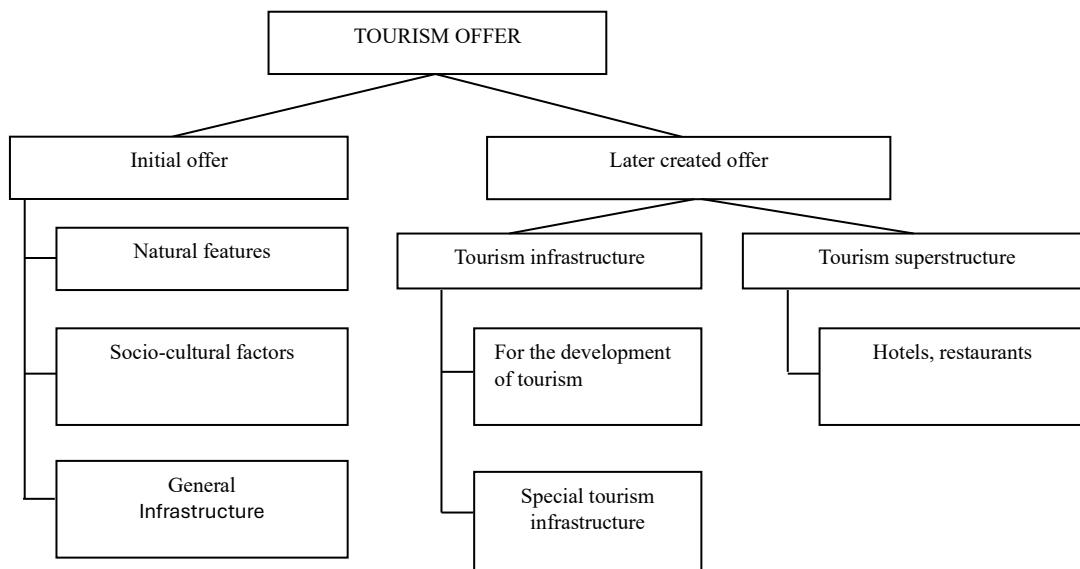
Depending on the geographical characteristics of the territory, it is planned to use tourism resources. The compact location of tourism resources in a certain area is one of the main factors creating conditions for their long-term use. The originality of tourism resources, the geographical environment of the area where they are located and the source of capital directed to them directly affect the long-term use. When determining the capital capacity of tourism resources, the number of tourists to be attracted and the development of infrastructure in the area are most often taken as a basis (6, pp. 186-192)

Tourism resources include religious and natural monuments, landscape, natural and climatic conditions, ancient monuments, architectural monuments and buildings, pilgrimage centers, communication systems, nutrition, utilities, transfer and transportation structures, hotels, health and security sectors, enterprises and institutions included in recreation and entertainment facilities, etc. (3, pp. 36-38).

The presence of natural balneological resources is of great importance in the development of sanatoriums and resorts in Azerbaijan, as well as in the development of treatment and prevention. Our country has historically been famous for its medicinal oil, which was exported as a rare medicine via the Silk Road. Since the 19th century, scientific research and studies of natural resources of therapeutic importance in Azerbaijan have led to the identification of development opportunities for sanatoriums and resorts (4, pp. 34-37).

In general, in the modern era of the development of information and communication technologies, it is almost impossible to find a field that is not related to this sector in some way. Today, a significant part of the sale of tourism products is carried out exclusively via the Internet. As everywhere else, much work needs to be done in the field of creating a telecommunications infrastructure for tourism to develop in our republic.

Below is a schematic description of the “tourism infrastructure” (scheme-1).



Scheme 1. Tourism infrastructures

Historical, natural and religious monuments, their locations, which will be effective and useful in terms of organizing tourism in our republic, when used as a tourism object, it is necessary to evaluate their profitability and social significance from an economic point of view.

Tourism is considered one of the areas that can significantly affect socio-economic development. Raising the standard of living and employment of the country’s population is considered one of the main functions of our state. Therefore, tourist bases are created by businessmen (businessmen) or with the support of the state in the country. This first of all creates conditions for the opening of new jobs, the sale of manufactured products, and the improvement of the social welfare of the population.

In order to improve the quality of infrastructures in the country, existing structures in cities should be renovated, and in general, unhindered operation of transport within the country should be ensured. The number of orientation and information, information and direction stands should be increased for the free movement of tourists. Informative books that introduce tourist sites, monuments, etc. Should be prepared, as well as detailed maps and brochures of cities and regions.

In order to ensure the development of tourism, which is one of the non-sectors in our country, it is necessary to modernize the infrastructure in this sector and organize tourism enterprises that meet international standards. In order to increase the competitiveness of the sector, there is a need to

increase the share of tourism in GDP and implement new standards.

It should be noted that the creation of the first national parks in the history of the country, along with other goals, aims to create more favorable conditions for ecotourism, one of the main branches of tourism, to protect and improve the natural and geographical environment, and in turn acts as an important factor in the protection of natural complexes. In this regard, the organization of the infrastructure of National Parks in accordance with the most modern standards, strengthening the human potential, and creating the necessary conditions for the development of ecotourism in the area are of great importance. Currently, ecological tourism in our country means the environmentally literate organization of foreign tourists, aimed at the use of its natural resources (5, pp. 3-5).

We believe that the introduction of a number of innovations in the issuance of visas at border checkpoints in our country, the filling of visa forms directly at kiosks at entry points to the country are factors that have a positive impact on the development of tourism. It would also be appropriate to install self-service visa kiosks by relevant state agencies, apply innovative methods, and accept payments by credit card.

As a result of the arrival of tourists to the country and regions, the local population interacts with tourists, the regions mix with people from different backgrounds creating a cosmopolitan culture. Due to the demand for better services, various job opportunities are created within the region and therefore people do not feel the need to move to other cities to improve their living standards.

Table.1 Social impacts of tourism

<i>Tourism-related activities</i>	<i>Positive social impacts</i>
Interaction with the Local Population	Communication
Established and personal relationships with the region	Education
Elite tourist arrivals, interaction, hospitality	Feeling of pride
Positive and courteous treatment of tourists	Improved behavior
Economic growth in the destination	Infrastructure construction

As can be seen from Table 1, the overall social impact of tourism necessarily increases various positive factors such as national integration, social advancement, communication and culture, preservation of cultural heritage, etc. (6, pp. 122-124).

In order to ensure the sustainable development of tourism in the country, to form a reliable and attractive image of Azerbaijan in the international tourism market, and to increase its competitiveness, a new Law “On Tourism” was adopted by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated February 18 (2).

RESULT

Currently, there is a need to study the issues of increasing the flow of tourists to the country based on assessing the current state of tourism, analyzing the impact of tourism development on improving the

lifestyle of the population through the construction and commissioning of tourism enterprises that meet modern standards in the regions. Azerbaijan has rich natural resources for the development of tourism, and we must use these opportunities effectively. After our republic gained independence, many projects were launched to take advantage of the favorable natural and climatic conditions of our country and to effectively use the tourism potential.

Tourism infrastructures are considered as a component of the tourism sphere, and tourism activities are understood as a set of existing structures and chains for purposes such as industrialization, recreation and socialization.

Tourism resources can be conditionally divided into two parts:

- 1) Natural resources;
- 2) Infrastructure resources.

Thanks to the development of tourism infrastructure, the facilities built in the territories generate income, and on the other hand, most of the facilities built contribute to the development of the country's economy. After the tourism product and infrastructure are created, a set of measures aimed at putting the tourism product into operation or selling the tourism product is implemented (exhibitions, advertising, participation in fairs, creation of tourism information services for selling the product, printing of booklets, brochures, catalogs, etc.). Therefore, tourism activity should be regulated by the state.

For years, due to shortcomings in the infrastructure, tourism and social development could not develop as much as necessary. We hope that after the construction work in the zones liberated from occupation due to the II "Karabakh" war, the quality of life of the population of Azerbaijan will increase in the future.

There are great opportunities for the development of tourism and recreation in Karabakh, which has been liberated from occupation. We believe that the use of the balneological resources available here for health and resort purposes can create a basis for the development of medical and health tourism in the region. In this regard, the construction and operation of medical sanatorium complexes could have a positive impact on the development of medical tourism (medical) in our country.

The application of the provisions put forward in the study highlights the importance of renewing infrastructures and creating new modern infrastructures in the tourism sector, and the importance of developing tourism through the creation of tourism products.

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