

**Аннотация:** Поскольку подготовка к Паралимпийским играм в Токио-2020 уже ведется, медийная стратегия Паралимпийского комитета Азербайджана сталкивается с серьезным испытанием. Целью Паралимпийского комитета Азербайджана является не только продвижение и направление усилий паралимпийских спортсменов страны, но и содействие более инклюзивному гражданскому обществу. Подготовка к Паралимпийским играм и во время самих соревнований предоставляет Комитету большую возможность расширить охват и аудиторию, привлекая новых сторонников, спонсоров и потенциальных спортсменов и помогая вдохновлять тех, кто сталкивается с физическими проблемами в Азербайджане. Но готовы ли медиа-стратегия и действующие каналы Паралимпийского комитета принять этот вызов? Это исследование направлено на оценку текущей силы медийной стратегии Паралимпийского комитета, путем сравнения с деятельностью Паралимпийского комитета в других странах, а также путем анализа их нынешних платформ с использованием сравнительного анализа отраслевых стандартов. Далее проводится оценка потенциала для дальнейшего развития медиа-структуры Паралимпийского комитета, как путем улучшения существующих каналов, так и посредством инноваций. Мое исследование убедительно показывает, что есть потенциал для улучшения и возможность расширить аудиторию для новостей и информации о Паралимпийских играх. Мое исследование будет доступно Паралимпийскому комитету, чтобы поддержать и проинформировать их медиа-стратегию. Будут проведены дальнейшие исследования и планирование потенциала для запуска новых инновационных каналов в рамках

обучения по программе моего магистра и в рамках обязательства поддерживать идеалы и цели Паралимпийского комитета Азербайджана.

**Ключевые слова:** Паралимпийские игры, Паралимпийский комитет Азербайджана, СМИ, социальные сети

### HOW THE GROWTH OF ECOTOURISM HAS THE POWER TO DRIVE ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS FOR AZERBAIJAN

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**Abstract:** As Azerbaijan's national strategy has shifted to encourage non-oil revenues, tourism has become one area of focus. While the impact of some tourism activities, such as the influx of visitors during Baku's Formula 1 or other major sporting events, are both tangible and visible, the value of other tourism sectors may appear less evident. Ecotourism is one such niche. This research shows that ecotourism offers significant potential for development, with benefits for the environment and national brand, as well as stimulation for local economies. Azerbaijan has in abundance the most important attributes required to develop its ecotourism industry: Natural areas of recognised outstanding beauty, rich cultural and gastronomic history, and a stable, welcoming climate. Added to this is the country's investment in the renovation of historical places and transport links, growth of international languages such as English and improvement in accommodation and tourism infrastructure. This research is supported by data and interviews from public and private sector organisations. But

underpinning the potential for growth in Azerbaijan's ecotourism sector are the country's natural resources, and there is already evidence from the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources that, with coordinated promotion at only minimal levels, the number of foreign tourists visiting the national parks of Azerbaijan are increasing steadily.

**Keywords:** Azerbaijan, ecotourism, tourism, national parks, hiking

**Introduction:** Ecotourism is defined as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of local people, and involves interpretation and education." Education is meant to be inclusive of both staff and guests. Ecotourism is about uniting conservation, communities, and sustainable travel (1). Another, simpler and more to the point definition is given by The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), which says that ecotourism is "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people" (2) Rapid development of tourism in the modern world, the broad infrastructure of the tourism industry, creates great opportunities for people's leisure and also causes environmental problems. Thus, eliminating the harmful effects of tourism on ecology is one of the important tasks facing the modern tourism sector.

In order to assess the potential for development for ecotourism in Azerbaijan, comparison is made with neighbouring countries such as Georgia, where ecotourism and hiking are already better established "thanks to the rich cultural heritage and a wide range of ecosystem, from subtropical rainforests, mountains, mountain steppes to alpine ecotourism." (3) For example, Batumi Botanical Garden and Mtirala National Park are frequently mentioned in promotion for Georgia's ecotourism destinations. Batumi Botanical Garden hosted 296,723 guests in 2017, a larger number than all visitors to

Azerbaijan's national parks in the same year. According to the Official Tourism Portal of Adjara (region of Georgia), the tourist flow to national parks is increasing steadily. For the first two quarters of 2018, the number of tourists in Batumi has increased by 23% (4).

Initial research has been carried out through the author's employer, a tourism company, and associated agencies and experts. From this research, it is already evident that there is a very little provision in the established tourism market for hiking, especially self-guided hiking graded to suit graded activity from beginners to experienced hikers. All the issues indicate that, Azerbaijan does not place a high priority on ecotourism and barely recognizes the potential for hiking. Initial research shows that travel companies target older consumers with higher disposable incomes. But in so doing, they fail to capitalise on the growing number of younger, healthy and environmentally conscious professionals and those with young families who seek new experiences at a reasonable cost. This generation is also more technologically aware and habitual users of mobile devices and other digital platforms. Very little evidence exists for current tourism companies exploiting this change in the market. Such a change undoubtedly requires additional investment and focus, but firstly, it requires the establishment of market potential. And a tourism niche such as hiking provides an ideal opportunity to develop new approaches, not just for the benefit of ecotourism, but the wider tourism industry.

The key objectives of ecotourism are as follows:

1. Minimize physical, social, behavioural, and psychological impacts;
2. Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect;
3. Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts.
4. Provide direct financial benefits for conservation.
5. Generate financial benefits for both

- local people and private industry.
6. Deliver memorable interpretative experiences to visitors that help raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climates.
  7. Design, construct and operate low-impact facilities.
  8. Recognize the rights and spiritual beliefs of the indigenous peoples in communities and work in partnership to encourage empowerment.

My research identifies hiking as one type of ecotourism which has significant potential, and for which there is currently little

	2016	2017	2018	2019 (nine months)
<b>All</b>	198,343	85,196	79,998	82,696
<b>Citizens</b>	195,372	79,337	79,998	74,079
<b>Foreigners</b>	2,971	5,859	7,529	8,617

Foreign tourists visit Azerbaijan especially in June, July and August (5). The most visited national park is Goygol Park then Shahdagh and Hirkan and others. (6) These statistics demonstrate that tourists visit the places that are the focus of promotion and advertising by government or entrepreneurs. There are many other locations of equally outstanding natural beauty which, it is reasonable to suggest, could also attract visitors.

**Conclusion:** Ecotourism provides an effective economic incentive to maintain and improve bio-cultural diversity and helps to protect the natural and cultural heritage of Azerbaijan and, indeed, our world. (7) The rise in numbers of visitors to Azerbaijan's national parks over the past three years clearly indicates a rising interest in ecotourism, achieved thus far without significant investment. My research suggests there is potential to develop ecotourism, both through national strategic focus and through enterprise. An output of this research will be further development work with the aim of

provision. The author's own geographical knowledge and active participation in hiking supports the potential for growth in ecotourism and in particular hiking in the Sheki region.

**Methods:** In addition to personal observation and interviews with tourism agencies, data from the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan and Official Tourism Portal of Georgia has been researched. The table below indicates the number of tourists coming to Azerbaijan's national parks:

establishing the potential for the launch of a website and mobile application, aimed specifically at the self-guided hiking market. This has the potential to deliver benefits for local economies (including restaurants, hotels and tourist attractions), support the further recognition of the importance of Azerbaijan's environmental treasures, and attract further numbers of visitors - both internationally and from within Azerbaijan.

My research shows that ecotourism - both as a concept and in practice - is developing, but only gradually. The logical conclusion is that it has the potential to develop further and faster, but that this requires a balanced approach from governmental and commercial interests, in order to gain the maximum benefits for Azerbaijan's outstanding natural environment, local economies, and the country's growing tourism industry.

## References

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### **Ekoturizm sahəsinin genişlənməsinin Azərbaycan üçün iqtisadi, mədəni və ekoloji faydası nədən ibarətdir**

#### ***Tunar Abuzərli***

**Xülasə:** Azərbaycanın milli strategiyası qeyri-neft industriyasına keçdiyi zaman turizm sahəsi diqqət mərkəzinə çevrilməyə başladı. Bakının Formula 1 və ya digər böyük idman tədbirləri zamanı turistlərin axını yüksək həddə çatsa da, digər turizm sektorlarının dəyəri yenə də az görünə bilər. Ekoturizm də belə sahələrdən biridir. Bu tədqiqat ekoturizmin ətraf mühitə müsbət təsir və milli brendin inkişafı ilə yanaşı, yerli iqtisadiyyatı stimullaşdıran inkişaf potensialının olduğunu göstərir. Azərbaycan ekoturizm sənayesini inkişaf etdirmək üçün zəruri olan bütün xüsusiyyətlərə malikdir: valehedici təbiəti, zəngin mədəni və gastronomik tarixi və sabit, qonaqpərvər iqlimi. Buraya ölkənin tarixi yerlərin renovasiyasını və nəqliyyat yollarının yenilənməsini, ingilis kimi beynəlxalq dilin daha geniş şəkildə öyrənilməsini, yaşayış və turizm infrastrukturunun yaxşılaşdırılmasına qoyulan sərmayəni də əlavə etmək olar. Bu araşdırma, dövlət və özəl sektor təşkilatlarından alınan məlumatlar və reportajlardan ibarət olacaqdır.

**Açar sözlər:** Azərbaycan, ekoturizm, turizm, milli parklar, gəzinti

**Как рост экотуризма может принести  
Азербайджану экономические,  
культурные и экологические выгоды**

#### ***Тунар Абузарли***

**Аннотация:** По мере того как национальная стратегия Азербайджана смещается в сторону увеличения доходов, не связанных с нефтью, туризм стал одной из основных задач. В то время как влияние некоторых туристических мероприятий, таких как приток посетителей во время Формулы 1 в Баку или другие крупные спортивные мероприятия, ощутимо и заметно, ценность других туристических секторов может показаться менее очевидной. Экотуризм - одна из таких ниш. Это исследование показывает, что экотуризм предлагает значительный потенциал для развития, принося пользу окружающей среде и национальному бренду, а также стимулирует местную экономику. Азербайджан в изобилии обладает самыми важными атрибутами, необходимыми для развития его индустрии экотуризма: природные зоны с признанной выдающейся красотой, богатой культурной и гастрономической историей и стабильным, гостеприимным климатом. К этому следует добавить инвестиции страны в обновление исторических мест и транспортных связей, развитие международных языков, таких как английский, и улучшение инфраструктуры размещения и туризма. Это исследование подтверждается данными и интервью, проведенными государственными и частными организациями.

**Ключевые слова:** Азербайджан, экотуризм, туризм, национальные парки, хайкинг