GEORGIAN RESORT - RECREATIONAL AREAS AND PROSPECTS OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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The object of research is the Georgian resort-recreational areas characterization and consideration of tourism opportunities in these areas. Nature has generously rewarded Georgia with tourist recreational resources. In the whole world one can’t find such other place, with such a huge number of different landscapes inside the small area like our country. That’s why Georgia possessing these unique natural and economic conditions has the chance to become a strong touristic country. There aren’t too many countries in the world with such natural, climatic and recreational-balneological resources.

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Georgia is the very important resort and a tourist country with the picturesque nature, landscapes, permanent snow and glaciers of the Caucasus mountain range, Subtropical zone of the Black Sea, rivers, waterfalls, karst caves, resorts and mineral springs, history, culture and natural resources. All this contributes to the development of unique sites or recreational resorts.

Vertical Zoning of the territory, according to the geographical landscape of the country, includes all kinds of landscapes ranging from the humid subtropics to eternal snow and glacier zones. Therefore the diverse recreational resources are available.

The country has natural recreational resources, environmental, technical and socio-economic geo-systems and their constituent components, which may be used for public recreation and tourist purposes. Recreational resources have natural and anthropogenic origin. Natural: components of recreational resources of the entire country or a particular region: mountains, forests, sea shores, caves, lakes, rivers, waterfalls, beautiful natural landscapes, healing mineral springs, the unusual beauty of natural monuments. Anthropogenic recreational resources include recreational historical, cultural, archaeological and architectural resources, monuments and buildings, museums, ethnographic and folk traditions of the peoples.

Object of the research is characterization of the Georgian resort-recreational areas and opportunities in the area of tourism. While working on this paper the author used the recommendations of researchers, as well as methodological instructions and scientific materials related the work in the field of tourism.

Zoning of the area is a complex scientific-cognitive process aimed at identification of every zone by any specific characteristics of spatial units. The main criteria for various recreational areas are:

1. Availability of natural recreational and historical-cultural resources, their concentration in certain areas;
2. Recreation services within the area of specialization;
3. The materials of the origin and development of the service sector;
4. The share of the population related to the tourism sector.

Based on the nature in Georgia recreational resources are allocated in several recreational areas. Each of them differs from others by specialization, facilities design and development potential:

The recreational area of Abkhazia was always the first place in the Republic by the number of people served. Its share in the whole set of all other resorts and tourist establishments was almost 40%. The establishment of this district is mainly caused by natural factors: mild subtropical climate, warm sea, high-intensity of sunshine, numerous mineral springs, three exceptional recreational resources of New Athos Cave, Gagra and thermal sulphite mineral waters of Besleti, Ritsa lake. Unfortunately, the recreational sector has been damaged and many buildings have been destroyed.

The recreational area of Adjara - very popular lately, especially for the spa facilities, the sandy beaches of this resort and coastal pine forest in this region. Tskhisdziri and green cape are especially significant. Recreational resources of Adjara are: “soft” climate, warm sea, mountains close to the sea beaches, abundant tropical vegetation and forests covering the river valleys, rich animal world, rare natural monuments and landscapes, historical, archaeological, cultural and architectural monuments of different epochs, rich folklore, diverse cuisine, hospitality traditions, cultural and religious centers (churches, mosques, theaters, museums, botanical gardens etc.)

Kolkheti or central Black Sea Region includes Kolkheti sea coastline and the foothills. There are some prerequisites for the resort-recreational agricultural development: flat relief, wonderful beaches, abundance of mineral waters. This region is bounded by the Black Sea, it has mostly wetlands, so there are some areas of touristic interest.

The recreational area of Rach’a is similar to Svaneti by its natural factors, healthy climate and coniferous forests. It has breathtaking landscapes, carbonated mineral waters, balneological resort Usere and the Shovi mountain resort. The region can offer exciting mountain side, snow-capped peaks of the Caucasus and the mountain ranges, rivers (which incidentally have great prospects for development of small hydro) and waterfalls, forests inhabited by many animals and birds, natural caves and caverns, passes and alpine grasslands – pastures. It has wonderful paths, reservoirs of Shaori and Lajana, Svaneti towers and other sights. All this has significantly affected the local population and ways of communication with them. Their rich historical background, life, culture, folklore, were described in past by ancient Greek, Roman, Persian, Turkish and European travelers.

Borjomi-Bakuriani is a region of mountain-type with multi-functional recreational area. It is one of the most important regions of the Republic. 15% of all sanitary-cultural and tourist facilities of all the country are located
here. Borjomi is the most developed and diversified local recreation complex primarily specialized in spa treatment. It is important due to its forested environment and climate. A forest covers almost the entire area of the Borjomi resort. Spruce, pine and oak prevail here. Many coniferous trees produce clean air therefore providing the resort with important medicinal properties.

Recreational mountain climate of Svaneti region includes mountainous landscapes, numerous mineral springs, the beauty of the wild mountain gorges, glaciers (Shkhara, Tetnuldi, USHBA, etc.).

Eastern Caucasus region has developed into a recreational one along the Georgian Military Highway. It has a long-standing tourist tradition. It is the oldest mountain-sport and automobile tourism district in the Caucasus. Most of the holiday resorts and places are located above the sea level on the altitude of 1900 meters. There is also a skiing resort Gudauri. It is situated at the altitude of 1700 meters. Snow cover sustainability caused its popularity as an alpine skiing center.

Mtkskhet-Mtianeti region is very interesting for tourists for its history, culture, museums and churches-monasteries. These create a good potential here for the development of cultural and pilgrim tourism. In this region the main cultural monuments are: Svetitskhoveli - Orthodox world, the Holy Place, Holy Cross Cathedral, ShioMgvime, Zedazeni, Fortress - Temple, Bodorna Church, SHATILI, Mutso, Chargali, Zhaleti ancient city ruins, Ochani castle, Gurgeti Church, Sioni and castle of Sno, Dariali castle, Dzalisi site and others. The region's natural beauty, natural monuments, protected areas, waterfalls and other sites create favorable conditions for winter tourism.

Recreational areas of Kakheti include Lowlands of Kakheti and Iori – Alazani. There is a house with mud cure resort in the region, as well as mineral waters - Ujarma white springs. Tourists visit historical and cultural monuments, Ikalo, Alaverdi, the Grammys. Diverse nature of the various regions of the globe can be found in semi-evergreen forests and sub-alpine flora. Eldar Plain is the lowest - 90-150 m. Sea. D. The highest place is Tebu Mountain - 4493m. Tusheti average height is 1880 m. Kakheti is famous for its cultural monuments. Many churches-monasteries and castles attract tourists and travelers. Kakheti has the following famous cultural monuments: Nikortsminda, BODBE, Khomabudji, Ujarma, Signaghi, Gurjaani region, Alaverdi, Ikalo, Grammys, Nekresi ... Each of these is a church or a monastery of an old tradition; they are still used for the holidays. This is the best factor for pilgrims or just people interested in cultural tourism. It greatly promotes the development of wine tourism. BC has its regional winemaking history. Before the beginning of the III-II century and still BC is an important branch of the economy. Georgia wineries are mostly concentrated in the region. Tourists are offered various local factories. Ethnographic corners with information about the enterprises, the manufacturing process, wine tasting and Georgian traditions are specially designed and presented to tourists there. Wine tasting is available in traditional families, where tourists can see cellars built in the old and new technological style, and also taste Georgian wine from special tasting dishes (listening to folk songs). Kakheti wine festival is held annually. Kakheti region has six protected areas: Batsara, Babaneuli, Mariamjvari and Vashlovani reserves, Tusheti and Lagodekhi national parks. All these natural locations have wonderful monuments of nature.

Meskhet-Javakheti regional recreation region is characterized by mountain climate with medicinal properties and many mineral springs. Here are some of the resorts in coniferous forests. A great asset as well is an important tourist center Vardzia and tourism-resort complexes Abastumani, Vardzia, Akhaltsikhe.

Akhaltsikhe region has rich cultural and medical touristic potential. Several spa resorts are located in the region. Leading cultural and historical sights are open for tourists. Atskuri Castle erected on a rocky hill on the right bank of the large river is difficult to access. 10 km to the south-east from Akhaltsikhe, over the dense forest on the mountain slope Saphara is located.

Special recreational resources are natural forests and woods. In recent years the importance of forests for recreation has increased. Here the forest has the primary role. The forest has great influence on the human body, it has its own unique characteristics. Special attention is paid to Pitontsidebi coniferous forest as it destroys disease germs. Particular preference is given to the pine, birch and oak forests. West Georgia is rich with that kind of forests. Tourists and visitors of the forest spend time doing various things here: hunting, walking, hiking.

In Georgia the resort-recreational agriculture as well as the availability of unique historical and cultural resources creates conditions favorable for the development of touristic environment. Kartli, Kakheti, South Georgia and Kutaisi are especially rich in historical monuments. A large number of well preserved early Christian churches, including Bolnisi Sioni, Nikortsminda, Cross of Mtskheti as well as picturesque temples and churches of the X-XII century can be found here. Georgia historical-cultural heritage of ancient settlements includes: ARMAZI (Mtkskhet); castle-inch (Senaki); Vani; Ancient Cave City Uflistsikhe etc. It should be noted that the unique cultural heritage includes also sites like Old Gavazi, (IV c.), Sioni of Bolnisi (V c.), Cross of Mtkskheti (VI-VII c.) – these came into the Georgian architecture history as classic domed churches. Georgian tourist routes included the three largest cathedrals: Bagrati (XI c.); Svetitskhoveli (XI c.), Alaverdi (XI c.).

It is also important to note ethnographic peculiarities of the separate geographic regions.

Georgia is rich in recreational resources. Georgia can become one of the most powerful centers of the world tourism. A thorough study of the forests allows us to see climates, recreational functions, mineral and thermal springs with medicinal properties, groto, spa resorts and functional places. Therefore we come to the conclusion that along with the tourism Georgia may become a health improving location.

Nature has richly rewarded Georgia with tourist recreational resources. One can't find any other place in the world, where such a small area like our country would have so many different landscapes. That's why for its unique natural Georgia has all the economic conditions to become a tourist country. There are only a few countries in the world "rewarded" by God with such an abundance of natural, climate, recreation and spa resources.

It is worth to note that tourism development improves a sense of national pride because a country, its
nature and culture become recognizable. Tourism can be considered as the best way to communicate to the world. Every tourist tells a lot about his journey, thus evoking a desire to see the country at others.

In conclusion, it should be noted that tourism development in the developing countries is really one possible strategy that gives short-time income stimulating the economy. However, people should not receive unambiguous information about the benefits of tourism, otherwise they may find themselves unprepared to the negative results. People need to be well informed in order to be ready to mitigate the negative effects and prevent them. In this case there will be less discontent and development will be sustainable. It should also be noted that in Georgia we should develop the tourism and recreation industry as the economic recovery and stability means - not by the defining and the core sector of the economy.

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