

THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRITOURISM IN THE MOUNTAIN AND FOOTHILL REGIONS OF AZERBAIJAN

**Chingiz Salman Aliyev, Novruz Amirkhan Guliyev, Tural Mahmud Salifov, D.S.
Mammadov**

Azerbaijan Tourism and Management University, Azerbaijan

Abstract

The article is about the existence of sufficient potential for the development of tourism and agriculture in the mountain and foothill regions of Azerbaijan, the concept and understanding of agritourism, the methodology of assessment and analysis of resources in settlements, villages and farms to start agritourism activities, and the organization of means of placement in agritourism.

Key words: Agritourism, region, development, accommodation, nutrition.

Introduction. In today's competitive world, it is irrefutable fact that, the state of Azerbaijan is a country that has become a peak of humanity with high tourism potential due to the Caucasus mountains, plains, 825 km Caspian Sea coast, rivers, lakes, inexhaustible and precious mineral waters, existence of different climate types and rich historical resources. The presence of a large number of healing water sources, salt lakes, healing muds and mud oils in the country shows that the country is effective in terms of health tourism. On the other hand, the fact that Azerbaijan has high-relief areas such as the Greater Caucasus, Lesser Caucasus and Talish mountains provides high potential in terms of mountain and hunting tourism. It follows that tourism activities in the republic are quite diverse. But the important thing is to effectively use this diversity and turn it into a sector that can make a great contribution to the country's economy.

Tourism is one of the important sectors of the economy of every country. In many foreign countries, for example, in the Russian Federation, tourism is one of the main sources of income. Under conditions of successful development, tourism brings a number of advantages related to the economy of different countries and its importance for the country in particular. Increasing the level of socio-economic development in the mountain and foothill regions of the country is highly dependent on the potential and use of tourism services [1, 2].

Innovations in tourism are innovations and fresh ideas in the field of travel and recreation.

Agritourism is one of the main areas including in the tourism sector in Azerbaijan. Agritourism is a service field that is formed from the intersection of agriculture and tourism sectors, and farmers are considered a new source of income, which does not require significant investment, effectively using existing resources. It is very important to increase their role in the socio-economic development of villages and settlements, the expansion of inter-local relations, the creation of an infrastructure network, and the development of regions. Ensuring the self-recovery system of nature in villages and towns increases the possibilities of using such areas for the modern development of the tourism industry. Therefore, currently operating service areas and favorable natural conditions in many countries create conditions for increasing the number of tourists attracted to rural areas.

The field of agritourism plays an important role in the socio-economic development of settlements and villages, in providing the population with new jobs, and in using the natural and economic potential of the regions more effectively. The main goal in the development of agritourism is to use the natural-geographical, socio-economic and demographic potential of the regions, as well as cultural-historical monuments, to restore the population's rest and healthy lifestyle, to increase the role of mountain and foothill regions in the tourism industry, and in this regard attracting local and foreign tourists living in the cities, especially in the lowlands, to the regions and further increasing the income from this area. There is enough potential for the development of tourism and agriculture in Azerbaijan. The main purpose of the scientific programs and recommendations, which are of great importance in this direction regarding the development of both sectors, is to provide the necessary information and knowledge to the entrepreneurs and farmers who want to start agritourism activities in mountain and foothill regions for the provision and organization of services in this area. In this research work, he found the concept and understanding of agritourism, the methodology of assessment and analysis of resources in villages and farms to start agritourism activities, the organization of accommodation facilities in agritourism, as well as a detailed analysis with the methodology of preparing a business plan to start agritourism activities.

Material and methods. The main features of the development of agritourism in the mountain and foothill regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan constitute the object of the research work. The research was conducted in 2020-2022 at the „Hotel and restaurant business” department of Azerbaijan University of Tourism and Management. The methods of analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction were used in the preparation of the research work. The topic of the research work was divided into stages and analyzed by the analysis method. The economic system of agritourism was investigated using the synthesis method. Through the method of induction, economic facts about research work on regions were obtained and systematized. Based on the facts obtained during the use of the deduction method, both theoretical results and general principles, important recommendations for action have been defined. GZİT/SWOT and TİZG/TOWS analysis method was used to evaluate the motivation and resources (internal and external) to engage in agritourism.

Discussion and conclusion of the study. Agritourism in Azerbaijan plays an important role in the sustainable socio-economic and cultural dynamic development of local communities, districts and villages, regions as a whole. The difference of the type of agritourism from other types of tourism is that all resources important for the tourist are sought in the village. Special tourism centers are created in scenic areas. In the tourism business of the Russian Federation, such centers are called „VIP-village”. Tourists in this country are offered a full-service package (special rooms close to „5-star” hotel service with cultural and entertainment programs, food service, comfort, ecotourism, etc.). At the same time, conditions are created for tourists to get in touch with „living nature”, occupation of the village and familiarization with natural resources [3].

The concept of agritourism in the mountain and foothill regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan is implemented together with the development of agriculture at the state level and the creation of agroparks. In the regions, it is preferred to accommodate tourists in separate rooms in the courtyards of rural houses (Gabala region, Nohurgishlaq village), in a village hotel (Galakend „Turshsu” recreation center, Gadabay region, Ivanovka village, Ismayilli region), farms and

historical buildings [4]. Nutrition is local, depending on the characteristics of each region. A night's stay in the indicated places varies from 30 to 50 USD [5].

Agritourism becomes more interesting for tourists who prefer new practical village experience and impressions, village life to traditional recreation. Thus, the emotional connections of tourists in this sector to village life, culture, nature, plants, local population, tranquility and presence of the village become stronger, and these factors directly affect their choice of tourist destination.

During the research, we determined that the following are the main activities and services that farmers can organize for tourists in agritourism:

Direct selling of agricultural products:

- Direct sale of agricultural products on the roadside, in front of the farm;
- Farmers/village fairs;
- Festivals of agricultural products;
- Sale of decorative natural handicrafts.

Overnight/accommodation in the village:

- Overnight/accommodation service in the countryside including rustic breakfast;
- Camping/tenting service in the courtyard of the village house;
- Overnight service/experience at the farm itself;
- To be involved in the preparation of local dishes from agricultural products.

On additional experience and recreation services:

- Harvesting of agricultural products;
- The process of processing products in rural conditions;
- Tasting agricultural raw materials and ready-made food products;
- Feed, care for and drive horses;
- Harvesting/making hay;
- To participate in the harvesting of fruits and vegetables, potatoes;
- Feeding cattle and participating in their milking;
- Demonstration of the process of making rural flour and confectionery products

(oven/ball bread, pasta, cake, roulette, etc.).

On excursion activities:

- Excursion to cultural and historical monuments located near the farm;
- Excursions to the farm (horticulture, farming, animal husbandry);
- Excursions to sightseeing (river, lake, forest, mountain, cave) places.

The most important advantage of agritourism is that, by using local products and existing opportunities, it increases the income of regions and helps to overcome economic difficulties. This, in turn, enables farmers and entrepreneurs to revive their farms.

Assessment of agritourism resources in the regions consists of 2 parts:

- Assessment of internal resources;
- Evaluation of external resources.

Assessment of internal resources is an assessment of the land area of the farm building, equipment and supplies, animals available on the farm, and financial resources.

The assessment of external resources is the neighboring farms, material resources (nature, culture, health), intangible resources.

We explored our internal and external resources to start agritourism activities. After these studies, we conducted analyzes related to the activities we will provide in the direction of

agritourism, so that the provided services are in accordance with the market demand, high quality and competitive. One such analysis tool was GZIT (SWOT).

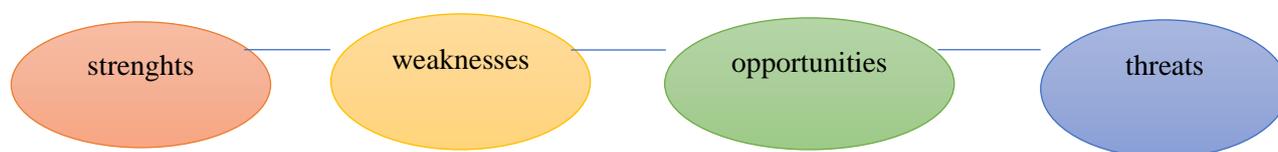


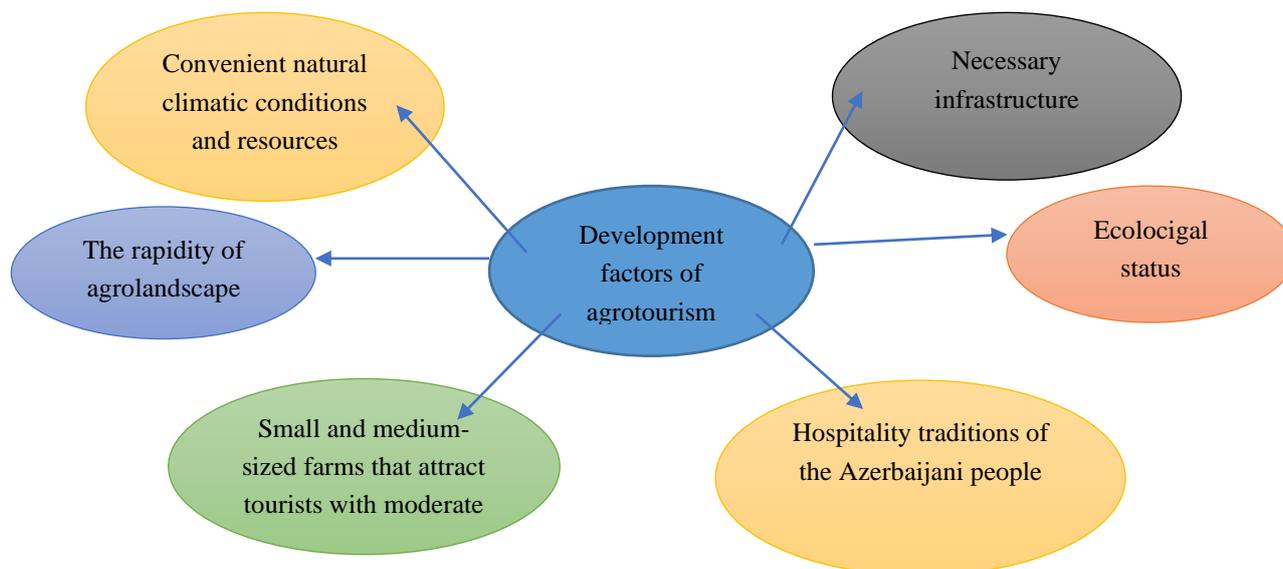
Table 1. SWOT analysis of agritourism

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Natural soil climate conditions 2. Availability of fertile land suitable for cultivation 3. Fields for growing fruits and vegetables 4. Availability of large pastures for livestock development 5. Workforce 6. Gastronomic service to tourists 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Long-term non-use of plots of land 2. Development of science-intensive agriculture 3. There are difficulties in collecting and disseminating information related to the development of agrotourism 4. Poor advertising of agritourism
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Access to new markets 2. Expansion of public policy 3. „Made in Azerbaijan” brand preaching 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Environmental challenges 2. Changes in the natural landscape with the construction of new enterprises 3. Increasingly competitive environment 4. Low level of attracting foreign investment in agrotourism 5. Intensive destruction of natural resources by humans

Source: Prepared by authors.

This analysis method was developed based on the data obtained as a result of SWOT analysis. The quality of this depends very much on the specificity, accuracy and detail of the information obtained during the SWOT analysis. The main factors affecting the dynamic development of agritourism are shown in the following scheme.

Scheme 1. Development factors of agrotourism



Food is an integral part of the services included in the guest house. Rural houses have a considerable advantage over hotels in the matter of catering. Thus, the village house serves a limited number of tourists. Because of this, each tourist's desire and way of eating can be considered separately.

The religion of tourists also affects the nature of food consumption. In this regard, when organizing nutrition in the regions, it is preferable to follow the following rules:

- To find out the tourist's desire - food intake depends on his religion, tolerance to allergies.
- Providing the tourist with information about the food you cook at home;
- Pre-arrangement of the menu with the tourist.

Thus, agritourism is a rare tourism product from economic point of view. For this reason, agritourism has the quality of „comparative” advantage in the economy. This comparative advantage is superior to many countries due to the special and inimitable cultural diversity, historical depth, uniqueness and geographical survival of natural cultural heritage that Azerbaijan has.

Result. In Azerbaijan, there is more attention for the development of the non-oil sector, especially agritourism. The wide potential of agritourism in the mountain and foothill regions of the country necessitates its development. The conducted analyzes show that it can play an important role in providing people with meaningful recreation and food security in those regions. Here, the abundance of resources, climatic conditions, etc. creates wide opportunities for the development of agriculture. also, there is a need to implement innovative projects to achieve the development of agritourism in the conditions of increased competition. The expansion of agritourism in the regions will have a positive effect on a number of following areas:

1. Increasing employment with the opening of new jobs;
2. Increasing the level of self-sufficiency with food and convenience food products;
3. Increasing the competitiveness of local products in the local market.

Moreover, the following suggestions can be made to further strengthen the development of agritourism in mountain and foothill regions:

1. Creation of special support mechanisms of the state in the regions;
2. Taking stimulating measures for the settlement of highly qualified personnel of the local population.

References

1. Soltanova H.B. “Tourism in the Republic of Azerbaijan and its development”, Baku AZTU printing house 2015, p. 15-65
2. Гуляев В.Г., Селиванов И.А., «Туризм: экономика, управление, устойчивое развитие», М: Советский спорт, 2008г. 280с
3. Gurbanov F.I. “Development problems of tourism in Azerbaijan”, Baku 2017, p. 368
4. Soltanova H.B., Huseynova Sh.H. “Basics of tourism textbook”, Baku 2017, p. 196
5. Ilgar. H., Nigar. A “Basics of tourism textbook”, Baku 2017, p. 119
6. Atashov B.X, “Structural and efficiency problems in the agrarian field (theory and practice)”, Baku Cooperation University publishing house 2017, p. 536
7. “Tourism in Azerbaijan Baku”, State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2021 p.99, (in Aze)