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TOURISM POTENTIAL OF SAMUR-YALAMA NATIONAL PARK AND WAYS TO USE IT

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In recent times, the rapid development of sustainable tourism has led to an increase in the use of nature and the requirements for its protection. Thus, the main goal for the development of sustainable tourism is balanced development. This is mainly related to the activities of eco-tourism in national parks. From this point of view, the article explores the tourism potential of the Samur-Yalama National Park, explores the organisation of ecological tourism routes and ways to use them. However, at present, along with the potential opportunities in the territory of Samur-Yalama National Park, there are a number of problems, which are also reflected in this article. As a result, it could be stated that although the territory of Samur-Yalama National Park is used for tourism, it causes serious damage to the environment and ecology. These damages have a negative impact on the appearance of the national park and the taste of tourists visiting the area, slowing down the development of eco-tourism and rural tourism.

Keywords: Samur-Yalama, national park, tourism, ecotourism, rural tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Today we perceive tourism as the most massive phenomenon of the century, as one of the brightest phenomena of our time, which penetrates into all spheres of our lives and changes the surrounding world and landscape [1]. Because the rapid development of tourism has an intense impact on nature and its ecosystems. This effect slows down the continuous rapid development of tourism, does not allow resolving the growing conflict between the natural, economic, and social resources of the regions, which stimulates it and meets the needs of tourists. From this point of view, ensuring sustainable tourism in the regions is not only a matter of creating conditions for its progressive development but also a difficult task of reducing the negative consequences of tourism and maximising the positive effects of nature use.

Sustainable tourism includes economic, socio-cultural, and environmental aspects of tourism as a part of the Sustainable Development Concept. Economic aspects include attracting tourism potential to production for future generations, creating new jobs, increasing incomes, returning investments, etc.; socio-cultural aspects include ensuring intergenerational equality of quality of life, eradication of poverty, meeting the cultural and spiritual needs of people, development of social tourism, etc.; while environmental aspects include protection and rational use of natural resources, conservation of biodiversity, environmental control, etc. We consider sustainable tourism as a new form of rational-planned use of the environment and link the forms of organisation of tourism in different geographical areas with its resource potential.

Thus, the sustainability of tourism implies the need for a minimum of savings in the process of using the amount of capital at the inlet and outlet. Sustainability is achieved in the case when part of the profit received from tourism goes to the renewal (protection) of resources and the liquidation of the negative impact of the process of production on the

surrounding environment and quality of resources. In the opposite case, the depletion or degradation of the resource is inevitable, which puts the question of the viability of the branch. Here, the environment and resources are understood in their broad interpretation and include not only natural but also anthropogenic components [2].

One of the main factors in strengthening the potential of sustainable tourism is the transformation of national parks with rich tourism resources into attractive recreation areas for tourists. To this end, the attractive features of national parks should be identified, and development directions and strategies should be developed based on their existing potentials.

RESEARCH METHODS

Using the method of analysis, the article analyzes the foundations of ecological tourism in the national park, systematizes the data obtained by the synthesis method (compiled a table), collects actual data using the induction method and compiles a map using the ArcGIS software.

RESULTS AND THEIR DISCUSSION

The national park consists of a protected area with a slightly disturbed natural complex (water area), and unique (magnificent and unprecedented) objects (waterfalls, canyons, extreme landscapes, etc.) in many cases. Special attention is paid to ecotourism organised in national parks using specially allocated roads and parking lots [3].

A national park is a relatively large area or territory, which is characterised by the following features: 1) one or several ecosystems are not significantly altered by human intervention or economic activity; 2) flora and fauna are distinguished by their peculiarities, and the territory itself is of scientific interest and subject to conservation and study; 3) local natural landscapes are distinguished by the beauty of nature; 4) the competent and authorised government of the country has taken appropriate steps to prohibit and restrict the economic development of the territory in order to preserve its ecological, geomorphological or aesthetic features; 5) visits are allowed only for cognitive, scientific, educational, and cultural purposes [4].

The creation and development of national parks is the basis for the development of ecological and rural tourism. Usually, national parks are established by the highest legislative body of the state. The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan signed Decree No. 106 dated August 3, 2004 “On approval of the regulations of national parks established in the Republic of Azerbaijan”. According to the decree, national parks are areas where natural complexes of special ecological, historical, aesthetic, and other importance are located, used for nature protection, enlightenment, scientific, cultural, and other purposes [5]. The next step is to expand the activities of national parks, as well as to identify potential tourism opportunities and to use them and other large-scale measures in our country.

One of the main goals of the “Strategic Road Map for the Development of Specialised Tourism Industry in the Republic of Azerbaijan” approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 1138 dated December 6, 2016, was to promote our country as a specialised tourism sector until 2025 [7]. In this context, attention was paid to

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the organisation of various tourism activities in national parks, i.e. the creation of walking routes, the placement of information signs, the identification of camping sites, etc.

In 2012, with the support of the German Federal Government (Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau, Frankfurt am Main) Samur-Yalama National Park (with a total area of 11772,45 ha) was established in the state forest fund lands in the Khachmaz region, in the border zone with Russia, within the Eco-regional Nature Protection Program for the South Caucasus [7]. The predominance of forest landscape (Yalama forest) in Samur-Yalama National Park and bordering with the Caspian Sea provided it many advantages. The forest area of the national park is 15,000 hectares; it stretches along the coast in the form of a narrow strip and rises to a height of 400 m [8]. The main tree species in the forests are *Quercus pubescens* and Iberian oak. Moisture-loving poplar trees are also widespread in the lowlands. Alder and willow trees grow on the banks of small rivers that cross the area. The forest mix includes mushrooms and small-leaved elm, *Acer platanoides*, and field maple [9].

In addition to the literature, we calculated the landscape types of the Samur-Yalama National Park and their area by the means of the ArcGIS program and determined that most of the area, i.e. 77,5% is forest landscapes, 10,9% is shrub-dry steppe landscapes, while the least area is forest-shrub landscape (1,2%) and semi-desert landscape (1,7%). Recreation complexes with settlements and their surrounding areas make 11,772 ha or 8,7% of the total area (tab. 1).

Table 1.

Landscape types of Samur-Yalama National Park

Landscape type	Area		In %
	ha	m ²	
Shrub-dry steppe	1284	12844293	10,9
Forest-shrub landscape	138	1389046	1,2
Forest landscape	9125	91242961	77,5
Semi-desert landscape	201	2005507	1,7
Settlements	1024	10242259	8,7
Total:	11772	117724066	100

Note: calculations were performed with the help of ArcGIS program.

The Yalama-Nabran shores of the Caspian Sea and the Khachmaz region as a whole are distinguished by the number of sunny days and the abundance of infrared rays, which play an important role in human health. One of the peculiarities of the Khachmaz region is the constant windy weather there. The Greater Caucasus Mountains on one side and the Caspian Sea on the other cause constant breeze formation in the evening and the afternoon [10]. The warm and temperate weather in our research area creates a basis for the development of tourism throughout the year.

According to long-term research, the Yalama forest belongs to the group of resort-recreation type forests. However, the Yalama forest has been used for a long historical period, mainly for agricultural purposes (agriculture, tourism, services, etc.). For this

reason, the primary forest cover has been disturbed, thinned, and cultural (anthropogenic) landscape types predominate in the forests (Fig. 1.).

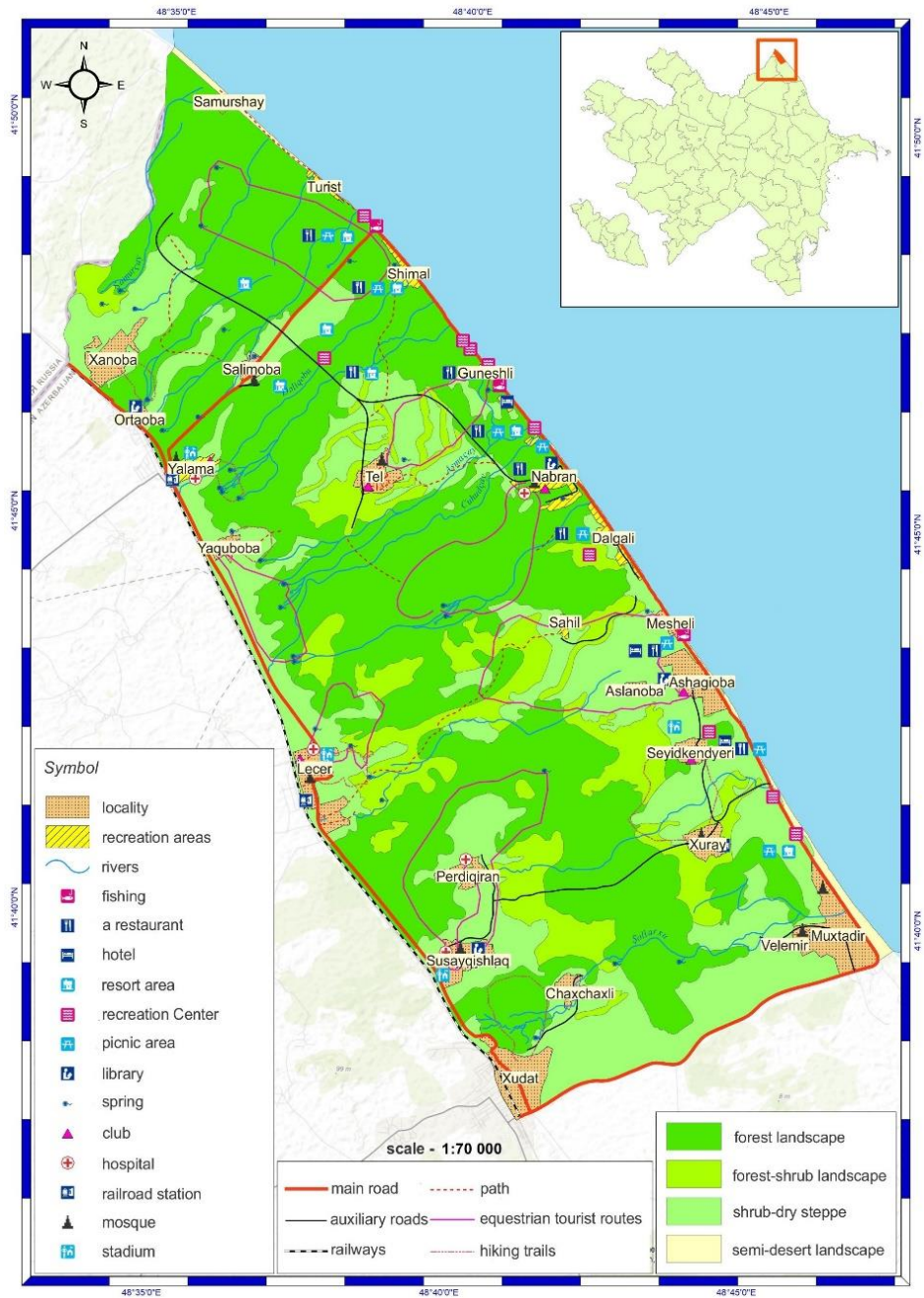


Fig. 1. Map of Samur-Yalama National Park

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In addition to having rich resort and recreation resources, Samur-Yalama National Park is located close to the capital Baku and Sumgayit, one of the largest cities in the country, and the proximity of international highways and railways, one of the tourist destinations, etc. factors can be considered as a driving force for its development.

It should be noted that the coastal areas of the Caspian Sea in the Samur-Yalama National Park are located in the Yalama-Nabran resort-sanatorium zone, and there are all favourable conditions for the establishment of recreation and tourism enterprises, eco-tourism, and rural tourism. Even in the former Soviet Union, this zone was known as an all-Union recreation area.

The main leading factor in the formation of the tourism region is the presence of beautiful deciduous forests, the Caspian coast, ecologically clean air, a developed transport network, horticulture, and livestock. The combination of these components allows predicting the creation of the Azerbaijani Riviera (sunny and warm climate, sea air, and scenic landscape) on the Yalama-Khudat coastal base in the future, improving the infrastructure of the sub-region and turning it into an international tourism centre [11].

Currently, the terms sustainable and green tourism are being widely used. Many experts attribute this to the development of eco-tourism. Because the priority for the development of eco-tourism is given to national parks. The status of national parks legally provides for environmental awareness and the organisation of sustainable tourism. This means the functioning of areas that have undergone little change in nature and the preservation of environmental conditions against the background of visual and aesthetic landscape [12]. Short-term (1–3 days) ecological tourism is organised in Samur-Yalama National Park, which has a rich and unique landscape aesthetic appeal, and rural tourism is partially developed here. However, these tours are distantly organized and are remembered not as nature-awareness tourism, but rather as photography and recreation.

Although settlements of the territory of Samur-Yalama National Park, their surrounding areas, social and public catering facilities, recreation complexes, hotels, resorts and recreation centres, picnic areas, springs, etc. are used for tourism purposes, they cause serious damage to the environment and ecology (Fig. 2.).

The calculation of these damages is almost non-existent, and a number of facilities previously used for tourism are currently in a state of disrepair. They have a negative impact on the appearance of the national park and the taste of tourists visiting the area.



Fig. 2. Unusable objects in Samur-Yalama National Park

RESULTS

Despite the above-mentioned problems, there is great potential for the organisation of public recreation in the Samur-Yalama National Park. Currently, eco-tourism activities in the national park are carried out in strict compliance with the “principles of ecotourism”, contributing to the protection of nature and improvement of the welfare of local residents. However, all this work is distantly carried out. Ecological tours, rural tourism, and awareness-raising activities are not properly carried out.

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ТУРИСТИЧЕСКИЙ ПОТЕНЦИАЛ НАЦИОНАЛЬНОГО ПАРКА САМУР-ЯЛАМА И СПОСОБЫ ИХ ПРИМИНЕНИЯ

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Сегодня туризм воспринимается как самое массовое явление века, как одно из самых ярких явлений нашего времени, которое проникает во все сферы нашей жизни и меняет окружающий мир и ландшафт. Потому что стремительное развитие туризма оказывает сильное воздействие на природу и ее экосистемы. Этот эффект замедляет непрерывное быстрое развитие туризма, не позволяет разрешить растущий конфликт между природными, экономическими и социальными ресурсами регионов, что стимулирует его и удовлетворяет потребности туристов. С этой точки зрения обеспечение устойчивого туризма в регионах — это не только вопрос создания условий для его прогрессивного развития, но и сложная задача по снижению негативных последствий туризма и максимизации положительных эффектов природопользования.

В последнее время развитие устойчивого туризма привело к интенсивному использованию природных ресурсов и требований к ее охране. Таким образом, основной целью развития устойчивого туризма является сбалансированное развитие. В основном это связано с деятельностью экологического туризма в национальных парках. С этой точки зрения в статье исследуется туристический потенциал национального парка Самур-Ялама, исследуются организация маршрутов экологического туризма и способы их применения. Однако в настоящее время, помимо потенциальных возможностей на территории национального парка Самур-Ялама существует ряд проблем, которые также отражены в данной статье. В результате можно констатировать, что, хотя территория национального парка Самур-Ялама используется для туризма, это наносит серьезный ущерб окружающей среде. Эти повреждения негативно сказываются на внешнем виде национального парка и

отрицательно влияет на потенциальный выбор туристов, посещающих местность, замедляя развитие экологического и сельского туризма.

Несмотря на существующие проблемы в национальном парке Самур-Ялама имеется большой потенциал для организации общественного отдыха. В настоящее время экотуристическая деятельность в национальном парке осуществляется в строгом соответствии с «принципами экотуризма», способствуя охране природы и повышению благосостояния местных жителей. Однако вся эта работа проводится дистанционно. Экологические туры, сельский туризм и мероприятия по повышению осведомленности не проводятся должным образом.

Ключевые слова: Самур-Ялама, национальный парк, туризм, экотуризм, сельский туризм.

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