

## DEVELOPMENT OF ARMENIAN TOURISM INDUSTRY IN WAKE OF GEOPOLITICAL AND OTHER CHALLENGES

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**Introduction.** Tourism is still a developing industry of Armenian economy, as it has many unresolved issues, such as: underdevelopment of infrastructure, a limited set of directions and sites to visit, and the dilapidation of many private and cultural sites. Moreover, some problems are not even in the area of state attention and therefore steps towards their solution are not taken. There is a lack of sufficient awareness and coverage of these issues, so the purpose of this article is to provide an in-depth assessment of the tourism industry, its strengths and weaknesses, and draw attention to problems and new opportunities that have to be taken into consideration in the strategy and action plan of national tourism development. Nowadays these issues should be carefully considered and resolved, since Armenian tourism has received the opportunity to host even more tourists from Russia than before due to the inaccessibility of their usual tourism destinations.

**Methodology.** In the scope of the article, the official reports, works and policy documents referring to research topic were studied and analyzed. The methods of systematic, statistical and descriptive analysis were applied. Necessary data for the study was obtained from the databases of World Bank, RA Statistical Committee and Tourism Committee.

**Literature Review.** Armenian tourism is considered to be a developing sector by many parameters, such as:

- tourist infrastructure state and its capacity,
- destination brand awareness of region,
- number of visits,
- level of service and many others.

However, it is important to mention that Armenian tourism demonstrated a significant growth during last ten years as the region became more attractive for travelers from a greater number of countries and Russian tourists provide the lion's share of it<sup>1</sup>.

Armenia mainly attracts people from its diaspora who come to the country to visit their relatives and friends, those who travel for business purposes represent only much smaller share of visitors. In the last several years, some noticeable changes in proportion of tourist categories took place – more and more people began to choose the country as a destination for holiday and leisure purposes. That led to a record number of visitors of 1, 9 million in pre-pandemic 2019<sup>1</sup>.

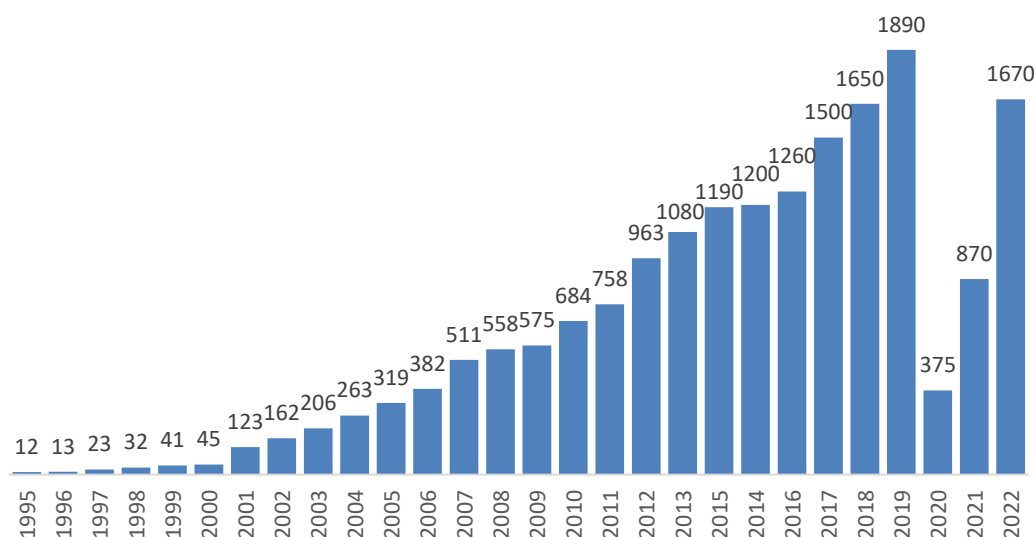
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<sup>1</sup> International Trade Administration Armenia - Travel and Tourism. 2022.

Armenia's key markets for international tourists include France, Germany, Russia, Iran, and the United States. The high-mountainous country on the Armenian Highlands has been one of the most popular destinations in the last six months among Russian tourists. The absence of a language barrier, investment opportunities, business and real estate transactions, mild climate and nature, cultural attractions and, of course, responsive and generous people attract tourists and those wishing to relocate<sup>1</sup>.

According to the latest data we can say that today Armenia indirectly benefits from Russia's isolation from the global market and the tourism market as well. The tense geopolitical situation between Russia and the western world and the subsequent sanctions have led to the situation when Russian tourists today have a very limited choice when it comes to foreign tourist destinations.

**Analysis.** Latest statistical data from Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Armenia (2023) shows that in 2022 almost 1,7 million tourists visited Armenia. It can be noticed that industry had recovered and reached its pre-pandemic level (Figure 1).



*Figure 1. Number of tourists visited Armenia from 1995 to 2020, in thousands<sup>2,3</sup>*

450,000 tourists visited Armenia in the first three months in 2023<sup>4</sup>. In 2020 the country attracted only 375,000 tourists which is five times lower than in 2019 when the tourist number was at the highest peak. That fact puts the country in 140th place globally in absolute terms. Such values were caused by a Covid-19 pandemic, but, in previous years they also were quite moderate, especially when we compare the absolute

<sup>1</sup> International Trade Administration Armenia - Travel and Tourism. 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Armenia. Armenia the hidden track. 2023.

<sup>3</sup> The World Bank. Development and importance of tourism for Armenia. 2022

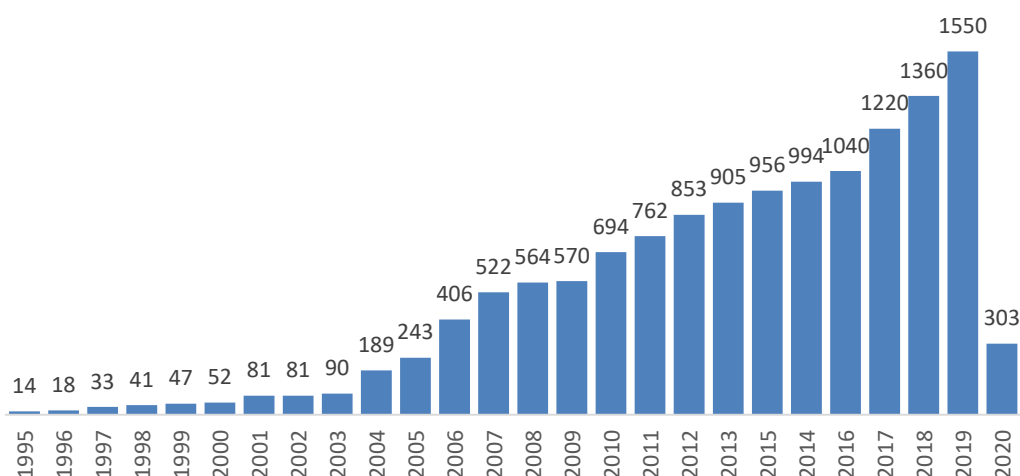
<sup>4</sup> Tourism Committee. Tourists' arrival in 2023. 2023.

number of tourists with other countries. According to experts, such moderate results are typical for smaller and developing economies such as Armenia<sup>1</sup>.

Having recounted the visitors number in 2020 against the population of Armenia, we obtained more accurate picture – 0,13 visitors per capita, which puts the country in the 107th position globally and in 12th position in Western Asia.

Average costs of each tourist visited Armenia in 2020 amounted to 767 US dollars, while Armenian tourists' cost abroad reached 906 dollars<sup>3</sup>.

The country's tourism revenue figures also demonstrated weak performance; in 2020 the sector gained 303.00 million US dollars which again five times lower than in a previous pre pandemic year. Over three decades, tourism revenues were gradually growing from 14 million in 1995 to 1,6 billion US dollars in 2019 (Figure 2).

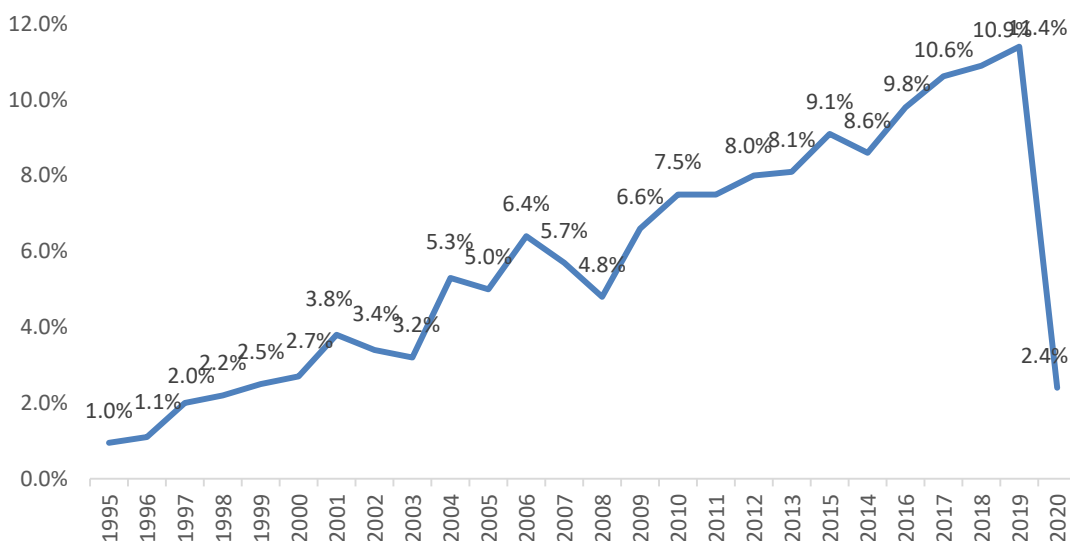


*Figure 2. Armenian tourism sector revenues generated from 1995 to 2020, million US dollars<sup>2</sup>*

Tourism Federation of Armenia reported that, the total amount of losses in the hospitality sector in 2020 amounted to about \$500 million. According to The World Bank data in 2020 the sector's revenues represented 2.4% of Armenian gross domestic product and about 0% of total international tourism revenues in Western Asia (Figure 3). During three pre pandemic years the sector's share of GDP was over 10% and maximum value of 11,4% it reached in 2019 which is a sign of the significant role of tourism in Armenian economy<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Статистический комитет Республики Армения. Международный туризм. 2023.

<sup>2</sup> The World Bank. Development and importance of tourism for Armenia. 2022



*Figure 3. Armenian tourism sector revenue share in GDP from 1995 to 2020, %<sup>1</sup>*

As a result, in 2022, 1,6 million people visited Armenia, which is 90.2% more than in 2021. According to the RA Statistical Committee, almost half of them are Russian citizens. In 2022, 790,4 thousand Russians arrived in Armenia as tourists. It is thanks to them that the total number of people visiting Armenia for tourism purposes has significantly increased.

The share of Russia in the composition of tourists who came to Armenia has increased: if in 2021 it was 40.2% then in 2022 it grew up to 47.5%. The flow of Russians has especially increased since March 2022, after the start of conflict in Ukraine. In terms of the number of tourists visiting Armenia, the second place is occupied by people living abroad, but having Armenian citizenship, as well as citizens of Georgia, Iran and the United States. The number of Georgian citizens coming to Armenia has grown sharply – by 2.5 times. In general, the number of tourists from all countries in the top ten has increased, with the exception of Ukraine<sup>2</sup>.

**Discussion.** Tourism in Armenia, for the most part, is characterized as highly seasonal, most popular periods are in summer and first months in autumn. The number of visitors reaches almost 200 thousand starting from July to October each year except pandemic years: 2020 and 2021 (Table 1).

<sup>1</sup> World Tourism Organization. Armenia International tourism revenue, percent of GDP - data, chart. 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Atoyan K. Tourism Industry in Armenia: Evaluation and Perspectives // A International Journal of Humanities and Management Sciences. 2016. № 1 (4). C. 5–10.

Table 1

**Tourist arrivals in Armenia by months from 2018 to 2022<sup>1</sup>**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>2018</b>	113	89	120	133	115	132	177	248	184	161	117	93
	217	311	704	205	962	331	456	827	153	095	603	421
<b>2019</b>	119	95	117	137	146	153	202	288	221	191	140	110
	548	837	765	597	783	901	322	260	507	772	376	685
<b>2020</b>	142	106	58	-	-	-	-	-	16	20	16	34
	370	637	788	-	-	-	-	-	471	534	642	-
<b>2021</b>	23	26	37	41	52	64	105	143	124	98	85	66
	345	088	698	881	908	101	127	168	522	970	762	738
<b>2022</b>	94	72	84	96	116	129	188	261	198	154	144	130
	339	262	197	938	495	908	856	834	074	847	576	429

The country can satisfy diverse needs and offer a variety of options for tourists traveling for different purposes: cultural, religious, ecological, agricultural, recreational, culinary, nature, adventure, and genealogical. Armenian rich heritage consists of cultural, natural, and historical sites, including six UNESCO World Heritage sites, medieval monasteries, churches, and fortresses<sup>2</sup>.

Most popular and well-known destinations among seasoned tourists and newcomers are: Yerevan, Tsaghadzor, Sevan, Dilijan, Jermuk, and Tatev. Undoubtedly the region has many other places with rich historical and cultural background, but they are not on main touristic routes and or the state of the sites is poor and not suitable for tourists<sup>3</sup>.

Rafting and ecotourism have only recently begun to attract attention. As for ecotourism Mr. Alen Amirkhanyan, director of the Hakobyan Center for the Environment at the American University of Armenia (AUA), claims that the country has favorable conditions and environment for ecotourism. Armenia is a country with a wide variety of wonderful natural landscapes and is on the list of 34 best places in the world in terms of biodiversity. About 350 species of birds, 250 species of butterflies, 3500 species of plants live here, and over over 300 rare and endangered species of animals are in Armenia<sup>4</sup>.

In Armenia, most of the historical sights are either hidden in the forests or closer to the villages. And sometimes they are located in such remote places that one needs to walk several kilometers to get to them. So, in Armenia, ecotourism can be easily combined with hiking and cultural trips. One of the best places for ecotourism in

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Armenia. Armenia the hidden track. 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Чапкина Н. А. Индустрия туризма Республики Армения в рамках ЕАЭС: состояние и перспективы развития // Московский экономический журнал. 2020. № 6. С. 533–542.

<sup>3</sup> Starr M. Eat, Pray, & Leave: Challenges of the Tourism Industry in Armenia // Megan & Aram - Travel Page. 2023

<sup>4</sup> Source` <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/arm159333E.pdf> , last accessed 10/05/2023.

Armenia is the Khosrov Reserve. Here one can see picturesque waterfalls, the ruins of the monasteries Havuts Tar and Aghjots, the beautiful natural monument “Symphony of Stones” and much more. There are several ecotourism centers near the reserve. One of them is Hye Landz Eco Village Resort. This ecotourism center has pets, that tourists can feed. The next ecotourism center located in the Khosrov Reserve is the village of Urtsadzor<sup>16</sup>. Thanks to the surprisingly low cost of living, the country is an attractive destination for travelers. The capital Yerevan is 66.34% cheaper than New York City, and rents are 88.31% lower than New York City<sup>1</sup>.

According to the Statistical Committee, at the end of 2019, 769 hotel facilities were registered in Armenia (with a total fund of 11,348 rooms), of which 410 in Yerevan (5,427 rooms). In 2021, there are already 915 accommodation facilities (Table 2).

*Table 2*

**Number of hotels in Armenia and Yerevan from 2019 to 2021<sup>2</sup>**

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
<b>Number of hotels</b>	769	847	915
<b>of which in Yerevan:</b>	410	480	522

As of the end of 2019, 5,203 employees were involved in the field, of which 3,409 were in Yerevan. At the end of 2019, the profit of the hotel industry in Armenia amounted to 79.5 million US dollars, where 62.2 million came from facilities in Yerevan. According to the tourism development program for 2020 - 2030 the number of hotel facilities in Armenia is planned to be significantly increased<sup>3</sup>.

More than 70% of the hotels in the country are under corporate management. Most accommodation facilities in Armenia are concentrated in the main tourist centers - Yerevan, the ski resort of Tsakhkadzor, the balneological Dilijan, the resort of Jermuk, the tourist complex of Tatev and the vicinity of Lake Sevan. In addition to hotels, Armenia has a whole range of other types of accommodation facilities - apartments, guest houses, country houses, hostels, villas, resort hotels. Each tourist center has its own specifics. The capital of the country has the largest concentration of accommodation facilities of the 4–5-star category with a high level of service.

Three-star hotels are the most accessible category in Armenia, represented mainly in Yerevan and in the ski resort in Tsakhkadzor. Four-star hotels are represented by world famous chains: Hyatt Palace Yerevan, Marriott Armenia, Best Western Congress, DoubleTree by Hilton Yerevan City Centre. Despite the international standards that these hotels correspond to, they are characterized by the unique flavor of Armenia, which can be seen in the design of rooms with oriental style and national cuisine. For

<sup>1</sup> Starr M. Eat, Pray, & Leave: Challenges of the Tourism Industry in Armenia // Megan & Aram - Travel Page. 2023

<sup>2</sup> RA Statistical Committee, Publications, Tourism, 2019-2021.

<sup>3</sup> Source` [https://www.mineconomy.am/media/9557/TourismStrategy\\_2020-2030.pdf](https://www.mineconomy.am/media/9557/TourismStrategy_2020-2030.pdf) , last accessed 25/05/2023.

example, "Tufenkian Historic Yerevan 4 star is a representative of the national network of hotels "Tufenkian Heritage Hotels", made in the style of Yerevan architecture of the 19-20th centuries, from traditional black and orange tuff. The cost of a luxury hotel room in a 4-star hotel is 100-130 US Dollars per day.

Luxury category hotels are located mainly in Yerevan - these are the Grand Hotel Yerevan, the National Hotel, the Caucasus, the Latar complex, the Multi Grand Pharaon Hotel and the representative of the international network Radisson BLU Hotel Yerevan. In the ski resort of Tsaghkadzor there are "Ararat Resort Tsaghkadzor" and the international "Tsaghkadzor Marriott Hotel". In the balneological resort of Jermuk is "Hyatt Place Jermuk"<sup>19</sup>. Governmental support and regulation: The national tourism sector is regulated and supported by Tourism Committee - a state body subordinated to the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Armenia founded in 2016. The Committee pursues a tourism promotion policy and has developed the Tourism Development Strategy of Armenia for 2020-2030. The aim of the strategy is to promote sustainable tourism through<sup>1</sup>:

- Increasing the number of visitors to Armenia and expanding domestic tourism;
- Diversifying tourism offerings and expanding the tourism experience;
- Extending the stay of tourists in Armenia and expanding their spending opportunities;
- Improving the quality of infrastructure and services provided;
- Improving the position of Armenia on the map of world tourism;
- Strengthening the system of tourism education and professional qualifications.

The Tourism Committee in the context of the goals set until 2026 stated that 2.5 million tourists are expected to visit annually, the development of 20 tourist clusters, and the restoration of 50 cultural and historical sites.

To support the industry during the period of restrictions, the government of the country resorted to state rental of rooms in a number of hotels to organize quarantine for persons entering the country. Later, this practice was abandoned. Hotels were forced in part, and in some cases in full force, to reduce staff, re-profiling the business for other purposes. At the same time, there was a reduction in the fund of the already limited number of hotel rooms in Armenia.

In August 2020, as part of anti-crisis measures, the country's government approved a program to promote the tourism sector. The target group of this program was organizations providing tourism services, including sanatoriums, catering outlets, travel agencies and tour operators. Among the measures taken was the subsidization of 25-30% of the wage fund. Organizations that, despite the reduction in income, retained at least 70% of jobs, could count on more significant assistance.

Although the government has been implementing a number of initiatives lately, crucial problems remain and actions to be made for Armenian tourism prosperity. As industry stakeholders state, the government should be more actively and deeper

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<sup>1</sup> Same place.

involved in investment projects aimed at developing the industry and opening and promoting new destinations and sites, taking on key roles of the main investor, manager, and guarantor of investments<sup>1</sup>.

Challenges of tourism sector: As it was stated in the World Economic Forum's 2019 Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report, Armenia was in 79th place among 140 states which is a significant move-up from a 84 position a year before. Overall, the country was well rated, the most appreciated parameter was favorable environment factors for sector development. However, there are still problems and flaws hindering the industry, and one of them is infrastructure.

The main and important stop factor for the prosperity of the industry is an underdeveloped network of flight connections. It is worth noting here that the state, realizing this problem over the past years, has already introduced a number of initiatives that have made it possible to attract several low-cost airlines connecting Armenia with European countries, which are key consumers of Armenian travel services (Starr, 2023).

Another problem lies in the restrictive or perhaps "overly exclusive" approach in choosing destinations for the development of local tourism. For a long time, the development of only certain tourist sites was supported, while others were forgotten and unnoticed. Garni, Geghard, Sevan, Tsaghkadzor, Dilijan and others are popular places among travelers. Many other not less interesting places were simply remained unnoticed, which led to a decrease in their importance and a failed modernization process<sup>2</sup>.

The third challenge is that according to the reviews of tourists from Russia, the proposed destinations and tour packages do not change, and after a couple of trips to the country, there are no other places to visit anymore. Reducing the number of tourist sites and destinations to just a few has led to significant damage of many historical and cultural places that are out of scope. For instance, the village of Koghb, replete with medieval monuments such as the basilica church called "Tvaraeghtsi", is in a half-ruined state. These two problems - the limited range of places and travel destinations and the dilapidation of many historical and cultural sites - are a key stop factor for local tourism<sup>25</sup>

The fourth challenge is that: Armenia is perceived as a tourist destination suitable for old people. As it is shown on Figure 5 almost 60% of tourists arriving in Armenia are in the age group between 36 and 63 and over 64 years old.

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<sup>1</sup> Петросян С. Проблемы развития туризма в Армении и пути их решения // Вестник университета. 2016. № 9. С. 47–49.

<sup>2</sup> Starr M. Eat, Pray, & Leave: Challenges of the Tourism Industry in Armenia // Megan & Aram - Travel Page. 2023



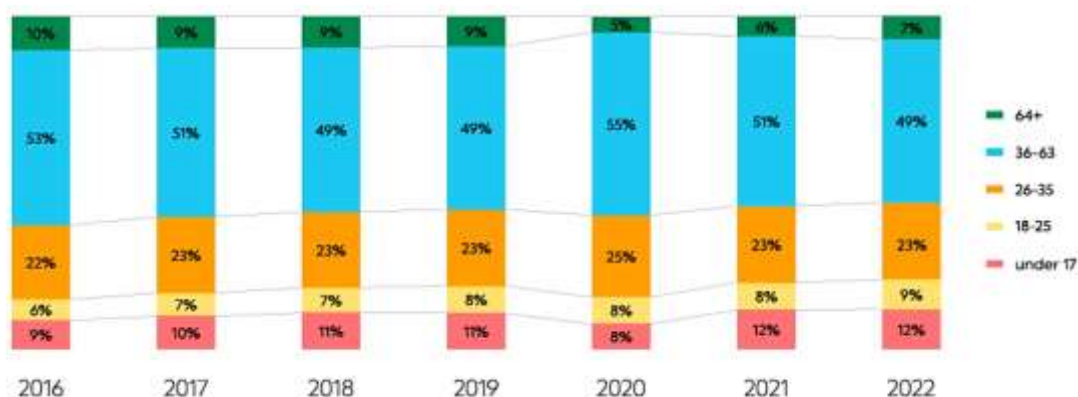


Figure 4. Age of tourists visited Armenia between 2016 and 2022<sup>1</sup>

Young tourists in the age of 18 to 25 represent only around 8% of all tourists. Unfortunately, as many experts note, Armenia does not keep up with modern tourism trends. Young people under 25 who have visited the country note that after visiting the main attractions, trying the local colorful cuisine, there is nothing more to do in the country. Leisure and entertainment for young people are absolutely not developed<sup>26</sup>.

Finally, safety insurance for travelers. The issue of security has become very relevant in light of the increased clashes in Nagorno-Karabakh. Since some tourist destinations are close to the conflict zone, there is an increasing need to ensure and guarantee security in order to preserve the tourist attractiveness of these places. As the head of the Armenian Tourism Committee stated providing safe traveling for tourists in Armenia is one government priorities today<sup>2</sup>

**Scientific Novelty.** Covid-19 pandemic and Russian-Ukrainian war altered the world tourism industry and Armenian tourism is not an exception. In woke of new global challenges and existing preconditions the need of new tourism development directions and measures towards them must be explored. The scientific novelty of this article is the comprehensive analysis of Armenian tourism industry and practical measures developed by the basis of that analysis.

**Conclusion.** An analysis of the tourism sector in Armenia revealed that the country has favorable natural and climatic conditions for the development of tourism, but is experiencing a problem in terms of infrastructure, management and investment. The governmental support and initiatives introduced today and during Covid-19 helped the industry to overcome the crisis period and recover in 2023. Tourism Committee applies all available tools and mechanisms to increase the transparency of the industry and its investment attractiveness which had some positive effect, but these initiatives need to be extended and include remained unnoticed tourist destinations. The problem with the development of other areas and cultural and historical objects that have fallen into

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Armenia. Armenia the hidden track. 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Мкртчян Г. Наперекор пандемии и войне: развитие туризма на юге Армении, на самой границе с Азербайджаном 2021.

oblivion is also awaiting a solution. And finally, we suppose that great opportunities for Armenian tourism lies in the development of a separate package of services and special infrastructure for youth, that would more tourist of 18-35 age group. In case all these challenges are faced and worked out the Armenian tourism not only be able to attract more tourists and but will be brought to a qualitatively new level.

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## **ՀԱՅԿԱԿԱՆ ՏՈՒՐԻԶՄԻ ԶԱՐԳԱՑՈՒՄԸ ԱՇԽԱՐՀԱՔԱՂԱՔԱԿԱՆ ԵՎ ԱՅԼ ՄԱՐՏԱՀՐԱՎԵՐՆԵՐԻ ՊԱՅՄԱՆՆԵՐՈՒՄ**

### **Վարազդատ Մերգևոսի Ներսիսյան**

**Համառոտագիր:** Հոդվածի **հիմնական նպատակ** է իրականացնել Հայաստանում զբոսաշրջության ճյուղի խորը վերլուծություն՝ ճյուղում եկամուտների, ժամանողների թվի և հիմնական շուկաների վերաբերյալ վիճակագրական տվյալների վերլուծությունից մինչև հայտնի և ոչ հայտնի զբոսաշրջային ուղղությունների և պատմական վայրերի ուսումնասիրություն, ներառյալ ոչ հայտնի, բայց այցելելու համար ոչ պակաս արժանի վայրերը: Կարևորվում է զբոսաշրջային սահմանափակ հետաքրքրությունների խնդիրը, մի քանի պատմական/զբոսաշրջային ուղղությունների ոչ բարվոք վիճակը և էկոտուրիզմի զարգացման հնարավորությունները:

Հետազոտության **արդիականությունը** կայանում է նրանում, որ այսօր Հայաստանում զբոսաշրջության հիմնախնդիրները համակողմանի չեն ուսումնասիրվել, կան խնդիրներ, որոնք տասնամյակներ շարունակ չեն լուծվել և դարձել են ակնառու Եվրոպայում ու Ռուսաստանում աշխարհաքաղաքական իրադրության ֆոնին, որին ի հետևանք տեղի է ունենում զբոսաշրջային հոսքերի վերաբաշխում:

Ուսումնասիրության շրջանակներում իրականացվել է վերլուծություն՝ հիմնված միջազգային և ազգային պաշտոնական աղբյուրների վիճակագրական տվյալների, փորձագետների և ոլորտի ներկայացուցիչների գնահատումների հիման վրա:

Հոդվածի **գիտական նորությունը** Հայաստանի զբոսաշրջության ոլորտի համապարփակ վերլուծությունն է և այդ վերլուծության հիման վրա մշակված գործնական առաջարկությունները:

Հետազոտության արդյունքները փաստում են, որ Հայաստանը առավելապես գրավում է ծեր զբոսաշրջիկների՝ անտեսելով երիտասարդ տարիքի զբոսաշրջիկների կարիքները: Աշխատանքում նաև անդրադարձ է կատարվում ճյուղի պետական կարգավորման և աջակցության խնդիրներին և ներկա աշխարհաքաղաքական իրավիճակի Հայաստանում զբոսաշրջության վրա հնարավոր դրական ազդեցությանը: Աշխատանքում կատարված ուսումնասիրությունների հիման վրա ներկայացվել է ճյուղի հիմնախնդիրների ցանկը և դրա զարգացման հետագա հնարավորությունները:

**Բանալի բառեր.** զբոսաշրջության ոլորտի զարգացում, զբոսաշրջային ենթակառուցվածքներ, էկոտուրիզմ, աշխարհաքաղաքականություն, հակառուսական պատժամիջոցների անուղղակի դրական ազդեցություն, պետական կարգավորում, զբոսաշրջային սահմանափակ ուղղություններ, թերզարգացած պատմական տեսարժան վայրեր, խարխուլ և անմխիթար տեսարժան վայրեր:

## РАЗВИТИЕ ТУРИСТИЧЕСКОЙ ИНДУСТРИИ АРМЕНИИ В УСЛОВИЯХ ГЕОПОЛИТИЧЕСКИХ И ДРУГИХ ВЫЗОВОВ

**Вараздат Мергевосович Нерсисян**

**Аннотация.** Основная цель статьи - провести глубокий анализ туристической отрасли Армении, от анализа статистических данных о доходах, прибытии и основных рынках в отрасли до изучения известных и не очень туристических направлений и исторических мест, в том числе менее известных, но не менее достойные посещения мест. Выделена проблема ограниченного туристического интереса, а также плохое состояние ряда историко-туристических объектов и возможности развития экотуризма.

Актуальность исследования заключается в том, что на сегодняшний день проблемы туризма в Армении всесторонне не изучены, есть проблемы, которые не

решаются десятилетиями и стали заметными на фоне геополитической ситуации в Европе и России, т.к. в результате происходит перераспределение туристических потоков.

В рамках исследования был проведен анализ на основе статистических данных международных и национальных официальных источников, на основе оценок экспертов и представителей отрасли.

Научная новизна статьи заключается в комплексном анализе туристического сектора Армении и выработанных на его основе практических рекомендациях.

Результаты исследования доказывают, что Армения в основном привлекает пожилых туристов, игнорируя потребности молодых туристов. В работе также затрагиваются вопросы государственного регулирования и поддержки отрасли и возможное положительное влияние текущей геополитической ситуации на туризм в Армении. На основе проведенных исследований в работе был представлен перечень проблем отрасли и возможности ее дальнейшего развития.

**Ключевые слова:** развитие туризма, инфраструктура туризма, экотуризм, геополитика, косвенный положительный эффект антироссийских санкций, государственное регулирование, ограниченность туристических направлений, неразвитость исторических достопримечательностей, ветхость и запустение достопримечательностей.

## DEVELOPMENT OF ARMENIAN TOURISM INDUSTRY IN WAKE OF GEOPOLITICAL AND OTHER CHALLENGES

Varazdat Mergevos Nersisyan

**Abstract.** This study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of tourism in Armenia: from analysis of statistical data on industry income, the number of arrivals, and main key markets - to the study of tourist destinations and historical attractions, both well-known and not so popular, but no less worthy to visit. A problem of limited tourist content, underdevelopment of several historic/touristic destinations and opportunities for the development of ecotourism are highlighted. **The relevance** of the study lies in the fact that today the problems of tourism in Armenia have not been studied comprehensively, there are problems that have not been solved for decades, and have become the most obvious, in the light of the geopolitical aggravation in Europe and Russia and, as a result, the redistribution of the tourist flow. As part of the study, an analysis was carried out based on statistical data from international and national official sources, the opinion of experts and industry representatives.

**The scientific novelty** of this article is the comprehensive analysis of Armenian tourism industry and practical measures developed by the basis of that analysis.

Research findings also include the fact that Armenia is a destination for aging people, while the young generation in Armenian tourist package proposal is completely

ignored. The study tackles an issue of governmental regulation and support of the industry, and positive effect of the current geopolitical situation on tourism in Armenia. Based on the results of this work, a list of identified problems and further opportunities for the development of the industry are presented.

**Keywords:** tourism sector development, tourism infrastructure, eco-tourism, geopolitics, indirect positive effect of anti-Russian sanctions, challenges, governmental regulation, limited amount of tourist destinations, underdevelopment of other historical sites, dilapidated and rundown locations and sites.