
Status quo and GAP Analysis Report

Status quo and GAP Analysis of Green
Tourism Development in Georgia and
Moldova (D2.1)



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1. Introduction

The green tourism sector is gaining increasing importance globally, and Georgia and Moldova are no exceptions. This report aims to analyze the current practices of developing new service concepts in green tourism within these two countries. By understanding the present state of the tourism industry and identifying the knowledge and competencies required for its sustainable development, the paper seeks to provide a comprehensive overview to inform future initiatives.

This paper is part of Work Package 2 (WP2) of the Enricher hubs project. The project's goal is to bridge the skills gap between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and the labor market in Georgia and Moldova, specifically focusing on green tourism service development. Through innovative training, the project aims to enhance competencies in sustainable tourism and service design, fostering collaboration between universities and industries. This project not only improves student employability but also promotes sustainability, aligning with EU strategies for sustainable tourism. WP2 aims to understand the challenges and practices related to designing new service concepts for green tourism in the Georgian and Moldovan tourism industries and to learn from exemplary cases in EU countries.

Green tourism, which focuses on minimizing environmental impacts, particularly in small-scale activities like ecotourism and nature tourism, plays a crucial role in addressing the needs of visitors, industry, and local communities. By emphasizing environmentally friendly practices, it not only enhances competitiveness but also promotes sustainability within the industry, ensuring a brighter future for tourism.

Based on the collected data and analysis, the report will offer evidence-based recommendations for enhancing the design of green tourism service concepts in both countries through education. These recommendations will serve as crucial inputs for Work Packages 3 and 4 (WP3 and WP4). Specifically, the results from the Status quo and GAP Analysis report, along with the Best practices report, will be utilized to identify training topics in WP3. Furthermore, these results will be instrumental in planning and implementing the training and workshops for external stakeholders as part of WP4. This interconnected approach ensures that the findings of this analysis directly contribute to practical and impactful development in green tourism in Georgia and Moldova. The report will be publicly available on the project's official page - <https://www.enricher.eu/>.

1.1. Methodology

The combination of online sources and interview data was used to gather comprehensive information for this report. Each partner university—Caucasus University (CU), Moldova State University (MSU), Comrat State University (KDU), Iakob Gogebashvili Telavi State University (TeSaU), Akaki Tsereteli State University (ATSU), and the University of European Political and Economic Studies Constantin Stere (USPEE)—conducted seven to ten semi-structured interviews based on the elaborated questionnaire (see Appendix) with tourism businesses and stakeholders to gain insights into the national contexts. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants representing various sectors of the tourism industry, ensuring the capture of diverse perspectives on current practices, challenges faced, success factors, and future needs related to green tourism service concept design. The organizations were carefully selected for interview by each partner and confirmed by the WP leader before data collection began. The WP leader prepared the final report based on the reporting template submitted by the partners. The interviews were conducted

either in person or via online platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet. Recording of the interviews was done only with the respondent's agreement.

In addition to interviews, online sources such as government reports, industry publications, academic articles, and official websites of tourism organizations were reviewed. These sources offered additional insights into green tourism practices in Moldova and Georgia. The credibility and reliability of all online sources were carefully verified before their incorporation into the analysis.

The findings were compiled into this comprehensive Status quo and GAP Analysis report. The report is systematically organized into sections that cover situational analysis, current practices, challenges, opportunities, and future requirements in the green tourism sector of Georgia and Moldova.

1.2. The Limitations of the Research

While this report offers comprehensive insights into the green tourism development in Georgia and Moldova, several limitations should be considered:

Sample Size and Representation: The semi-structured interviews were limited to seven to ten per Partner University, which may not fully represent the entire spectrum of the tourism industry in each country. The purposive sampling method aimed to include diverse perspectives, but some sectors or viewpoints might have been inadvertently excluded.

Geographic and Institutional Scope: The research focused on specific partner universities and their local contexts. Therefore, the findings may reflect regional rather than national trends, potentially limiting the generalizability of the results across the entire countries of Georgia and Moldova.

Language and Interpretation: Given the multilingual contexts of Georgia and Moldova, interviews and sources involved translations, which could introduce nuances or misinterpretations. Efforts were made to maintain accuracy, but language barriers can still affect the fidelity of information.

Despite these limitations, the report presents a valuable and timely analysis of the green tourism sector. The diverse range of perspectives gathered from various stakeholders provides a rich understanding of current practices, challenges, and opportunities. This foundation will be instrumental in guiding future initiatives and strategies to promote sustainable tourism development in Georgia and Moldova.

2. Georgia

2.1. Situational Analysis

Green tourism, which focuses on green practices to minimize environmental impact and enhance socio-economic benefits, is gaining prominence in Georgia. Georgia has witnessed significant growth in its tourism sector, with international arrivals reaching record-breaking numbers. In 2023, the number of international visitors reached about 6 million, recovering 80% of the levels seen in the pre-COVID year of 2019. This rapid expansion highlights the need for sustainable development to preserve the country's natural and cultural heritage. The Georgian National Tourism Administration, along with

various associations and donors, is actively working to improve conditions for sustainable tourism.

Georgia boasts a diverse array of attractions, including the Caucasus Mountains, the Black Sea coastline, national parks, and UNESCO World Heritage Sites, making it an ideal destination for green tourism. The country's rich history, 8,000-year-old winemaking tradition, and unique cuisine further enhance its appeal. Sustainability was mentioned in Georgian Tourism Strategy 2025 as one of the guiding principles - Focused on Sustainability – Centered on the National Geographic Society concept of “Geotourism” – travel that sustains and enhances the geographical character of a place, including its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and the well-being of its residents. [1]

The GIZ publication “Green Tourism in Georgia – 12 Portraits of Practitioners” [2], indicated that despite its potential, Georgia faces significant challenges in developing sustainable tourism. The rapid increase in visitor numbers has outpaced infrastructure development, particularly in waste management, wastewater treatment, and land-use planning. According to the report addressing these gaps is critical for sustainable tourism growth.

The publication emphasized the following list outlining the criteria chosen for Georgia's green tourism concept. While not exhaustive, it serves as a foundation to explore current offerings in Georgia and to guide future development.

- Use of innovative technologies and renewable materials for infrastructure, integrating it into the natural landscape.
- Utilization of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies.
- Ensuring a safe drinking water supply and minimizing water consumption.
- Implementation of wastewater treatment systems.
- Effective solid waste management through avoidance, recycling, and disposal.
- Production and consumption of natural, homemade, or local products.
- Quality control, labeling, and certification of products as organic.
- Minimization of negative impacts from tour operations and avoidance of high-impact activities.
- Staff training in environmental awareness and behavior.
- Enhancing environmental awareness among visitors during tours and in accommodations.
- Use of visitor guidelines or a 'Code of Conduct' for tours and accommodations.
- Support for non-profit activities focused on conservation, natural resource regeneration, cultural heritage protection, and social development.

The publication also highlighted the personal stories and experiences of practitioners across Georgia who are developing sustainable businesses in the ecotourism sector. These stories demonstrated the practical application of green tourism principles and their positive impact on local communities.

In addition to the efforts outlined by the GIZ programme, Georgia formulated a comprehensive policy framework to guide the development of green tourism. The "Ecotourism Strategy for Georgia 2020-2030," published by the Georgian National Tourism Administration (GNTA), provides a roadmap for sustainable tourism development in the country [3]. The strategy outlined several key objectives and targets for the sustainable development of tourism in Georgia:

- **Conservation and Protection:** Prioritizing the conservation and protection of biodiversity, ecosystems, and cultural heritage sites throughout the country.

- **Community Engagement:** Engaging local communities in tourism planning and development processes, ensuring their participation and benefit from tourism activities.
- **Capacity Building:** Enhancing the capacity of tourism stakeholders, including tour operators, accommodation providers, and local guides, to deliver high-quality and sustainable tourism experiences.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Investing in infrastructure development to support sustainable tourism, including waste management facilities, visitor centers, and eco-friendly accommodation options.
- **Promotion and Marketing:** Promoting Georgia as a premier ecotourism destination through targeted marketing campaigns, highlighting the country's natural beauty, cultural richness, and sustainable tourism offerings.

The objectives outlined in the Ecotourism Strategy align closely with the criteria for green tourism emphasized by the GIZ program. By integrating innovative technologies, promoting renewable energy sources, and prioritizing environmental conservation, Georgia aims to create a conducive environment for sustainable tourism development.

According to the Ecotourism strategy document, while Georgia made significant strides in promoting sustainable tourism, several challenges persist. These include the need for further investment in infrastructure, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement. Additionally, the rapid growth of tourism presents challenges in managing visitor numbers and mitigating environmental impacts. However, according to the document Georgia also enjoys several opportunities to develop its green tourism sector further. The country's diverse natural landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and warm hospitality provide a strong foundation for sustainable tourism growth. These assets and strategic initiatives outlined in the Ecotourism Strategy can help Georgia position itself as a leading ecotourism destination in the region.

According to Investor.ge's publication on Georgia's green tourism initiatives [4], the country's approach to transforming its tourism sector reflects a strategic shift towards sustainability and environmental responsibility. Georgia acknowledges the need to diversify its tourism offerings beyond traditional mass tourism, targeting higher-spending tourists who seek unique and environmentally conscious experiences.

The article mentions Georgia's tourism strategy 2025 which stresses the importance of quality and variety in tourist experiences over sheer visitor numbers. [1] The country's appeal to high-value tourists, particularly from Europe and the Middle East, is underscored by its efforts to develop eco-, adventure-, and nature-based tourism. Sustainable accommodation options, such as those emphasizing biohacking and sustainable wellness, cater to the preferences of luxury travelers seeking authentic and culturally immersive experiences.

The article stresses that investments in ecotourism infrastructure, such as mountain resorts and protected areas, underscore Georgia's commitment to sustainable tourism development. By expanding national parks and promoting nature-based tourism, Georgia aims to preserve its natural heritage while fostering economic growth. Additionally, adventure tourism activities like horse-riding treks and mountaineering enhance the country's appeal as an adventure destination. Although challenges such as infrastructure development and environmental conservation persist, Georgia's targeted policies and incentives demonstrate its dedication to green tourism.

A key player in this effort is the Ecotourism Association of Georgia[4], which plays a pivotal role in advancing sustainable tourism practices across the country. Established with the mission to promote environmentally responsible tourism initiatives, the association brings

together various stakeholders from the tourism industry, including tour operators, accommodation providers, and environmental organizations. The association's goals include:

- **Promoting Sustainable Practices:** Encouraging tourism businesses to adopt sustainable practices that minimize environmental impact while enhancing socio-economic benefits for local communities.
- **Advocacy and Education:** Advocating for policies that support sustainable tourism development in Georgia and educating stakeholders about the importance of environmental stewardship.
- **Certification and Standards:** Developing and implementing certification programs and standards for ecotourism businesses to ensure adherence to sustainable practices.
- **Community Engagement:** Engaging local communities in ecotourism initiatives, fostering partnerships that promote community-based tourism and equitable distribution of economic benefits.
- **Conservation and Biodiversity:** Supporting conservation efforts and biodiversity protection through ecotourism activities, contributing to the preservation of Georgia's natural heritage

In summary, Georgia's transition towards green tourism signifies a strategic shift towards sustainable economic development. Georgia aims to position itself as a premier destination for eco-conscious travelers, balancing economic growth with environmental stewardship. Georgia's transition towards sustainable and green tourism represents a promising avenue for economic development while safeguarding its natural and cultural heritage. Capitalizing on its natural assets and promoting responsible tourism practices, Georgia can position itself as a leading destination for eco-conscious travelers. This approach contributes to both economic prosperity and environmental sustainability.

2.2. Current Practices and Key Success Factors in Green Tourism Development of Georgia

The survey results reveal that Georgia's green tourism sector is still in its early stages, with varying levels of understanding and implementation among industry players. While the concept of green tourism is generally understood, its practical execution remains inconsistent. Often driven by demand, eco-conscious tourists, particularly from Europe, influence local practices. These tourists prefer sustainable behaviors such as minimizing plastic waste and conserving water. However, widespread adoption of these initiatives is hindered by the lack of government mandates and standardized practices.

According to a representative of the Georgian National Tourism Administration (GNTA), efforts are being made at the national level to embed sustainability into the tourism strategy. The GNTA collaborates with donors to develop policy papers and strategies, including an ecotourism action plan that evaluates and recommends sustainable practices. These structured approaches aim to prioritize sustainable development and provide guidelines for various projects.

On the business front, there are number of examples of companies integrating sustainable practices and modern technology into niche tourism sectors. For instance, post-COVID, there has been an increased demand for sustainable and adventure tourism, along with gastronomic experiences. Businesses that have thrived in this environment attribute their success to extensive research and a deep understanding of their target audience, demonstrating the importance of informed strategies in green tourism.

Transport companies are also moving towards sustainability, with some aiming to transition entirely to electric vehicles. Market incentives, such as resorts allowing only electric vehicles in their property, encourage this shift. However, the transition requires significant investment, and a comprehensive understanding of green tourism is still lacking among many businesses.

Tour companies are increasingly introducing green tourism products in response to rising demand. Some have hired consultants to raise awareness and develop sustainable products, especially targeting the European market. This proactive adaptation highlights the evolving market dynamics and the necessity for businesses to stay ahead of trends.

Brand hotel chains are setting positive examples by implementing brand-mandated green initiatives, such as waste separation, recycling collaborations, and energy-efficient installations. Although these practices require substantial initial investments, they result in long-term savings and reduced environmental impact. The main challenge is changing employee mindsets toward these new practices.

In contrast, small hotels are adopting energy-saving measures, including reducing the frequency of towel changes and reminding guests to save energy through leaflets and signs. During off-peak seasons, they close certain sections of their buildings to conserve energy. However, power cuts pose a challenge, as high-voltage generators are not environmentally friendly. To address this issue, there is a growing interest in alternative energy sources like solar batteries, which would reduce gas emissions and save energy costs.

Some establishments go beyond basic green practices by incorporating comprehensive eco-tourism models. These businesses use eco-friendly materials, involve local communities in service processes, and focus on green business practices. Their success often stems from a combination of prior market experience and external support from media and donors.

Small family wineries exemplify successful ecotourism by engaging in organic viticulture and low-intervention wine production, emphasizing environmental protection through waste management. These wineries produce bio compost from organic waste and leftovers, ensuring no harmful chemicals are used, thereby protecting the soil, air, and ozone layer. They have expanded their services beyond wine production to include kitchens offering local organic food and accommodations in green environments. Key to their success are the training and workshops provided by various organizations and opportunities for study visits abroad, which enhance their professional development and implementation of green practices.

A notable initiative involves reinforcing landslide-prone slopes by planting fruit trees, thus naturally strengthening the soil with roots and preventing environmental degradation. Waste products, such as beer waste, are repurposed as animal feed, and chemical-laden water is filtered to prevent environmental harm. This holistic approach ensures that their business operations do not negatively impact nature.

Creating additional green spaces for tourists to relax and enjoy nature is another practice adopted by respondents. This aligns with the growing emphasis on sustainability and ecology. The importance of individual awareness and responsibility is underscored, with a call for better environmental education and infrastructure. There is a noticeable shift towards maintaining authenticity in tourism offerings, as businesses realize that showcasing the natural beauty and traditional aspects of Georgia is more appealing to tourists than replicating comforts they find in Europe.

Protected areas prioritize monument and nature protection, alongside organizing cleaning campaigns in surrounding areas. Collaboration with schools to conduct classes on ecotourism and biodiversity raises awareness among young people. These educational initiatives highlight natural monuments and promote environmentally friendly behaviors. An eco-friendly lighting system and a new 4.5 km eco-tourist trail have been installed, connecting various natural sites and providing picnic areas, shelters, and restrooms. This extensive network of eco-trails, spanning 72 km, enhances the visitor experience while ensuring the protection of natural resources.

In Kakheti region, the current practices in the hospitality and tourism industry, as highlighted by respondents from various organizations, emphasize a strong commitment to green tourism initiatives. For instance, one of the brand wine company situated in the village of Kisishkevi, Telavi district, has integrated modern technological advancements with traditional winemaking methods. Their offerings include a hotel restaurant, spa, and wine production facilities, all geared towards providing visitors with a holistic experience immersed in Georgian culture. The company places significant emphasis on eco-friendly practices, such as serving dishes made from locally sourced, organic ingredients and providing spa treatments using natural products. Additionally, they have implemented green tourism strategies like wine baths and mud procedures, all while ensuring the preservation of the natural environment surrounding their facilities.

Similarly, Spa Resort, nestled amidst pine forests in Telavi, offers a range of services designed to capitalize on its natural surroundings. The resort provides guests with opportunities for outdoor activities like hiking and cycling, leveraging the pristine environment to enhance visitor experiences. Moreover, the resort actively engages in environmental conservation efforts, employing eco-friendly practices such as drip irrigation systems to conserve water and using electric vehicles for transportation within the resort.

Furthermore, the brand hotel in Kakheti stands out for its commitment to sustainable practices. The hotel incorporates Georgian cultural heritage into its design while prioritizing environmental sustainability. From eco-friendly amenities like bicycle paths and tennis courts to the use of energy-efficient lighting and organic food options, the hotel ensures that guests can enjoy luxury without compromising on environmental responsibility.

In addition to individual establishments, regional tourism initiatives, such as those led by DMO Visit Kakheti, play a crucial role in promoting green tourism. By supporting projects like the marking of hiking trails and providing financial assistance for eco-friendly initiatives, these organizations contribute to the overall development of sustainable tourism practices in the region.

According to respondents, green tourism in Georgia is driven by a mix of tourist demand, strategic policy development, and proactive business efforts. The sector's success hinges on a comprehensive understanding of sustainability, substantial initial investments, and a holistic approach to environmental responsibility. Despite the challenges, the evolving practices and growing awareness suggest a promising future for green tourism in Georgia.

In conclusion, the green tourism sector in Georgia is on a promising trajectory, driven by a combination of tourist demand, strategic policy development, and proactive business efforts. The sector's success hinges on a comprehensive understanding of sustainability, substantial initial investments, and a holistic approach to environmental responsibility. Despite the significant challenges in waste and sewage management etc. discussed in more detail in the next chapter, the evolving practices and growing awareness among industry players indicate a bright future for green tourism in Georgia. The collaborative

efforts of the Georgian National Tourism Administration, DMOs, businesses, and eco-conscious tourists are laying the foundation for a more sustainable and environmentally responsible tourism industry. With continued focus and investment in sustainable practices, Georgia's tourism sector is well-positioned to thrive while preserving the country's natural beauty and cultural heritage.

2.3. Challenges Faced in Green Tourism Development of Georgia

Green tourism in Georgia, despite its potential, faces a myriad of challenges that hinder its full development. These challenges are multifaceted and arise from various sectors, including government support, resource constraints, market demand, awareness, infrastructure, and regulatory frameworks. Industry stakeholders from regions such as Adjara, Kakheti, and Imereti have highlighted these issues, underscoring the need for a comprehensive and collaborative approach to overcome them. This chapter explores the primary obstacles to green tourism development in Georgia, based on insights gathered from industry professionals.

Government Support and Regulatory Challenges

A significant barrier to green tourism in Georgia is the lack of governmental support and clear regulatory frameworks. Stakeholders, including inbound tour operators and tourism managers with substantial industry experience, report that the absence of government mandates and standards for sustainable practices makes it difficult to promote green tourism. While the current policy environment is not overly restrictive, it lacks the necessary guidance and support to drive businesses and society towards sustainability.

For example, obtaining bio-certificates is particularly challenging due to the limited number of certifying bodies in Georgia. This regulatory gap hampers businesses' efforts to adopt and implement green tourism principles consistently. Additionally, the broader economic challenges, such as inadequate waste management systems, further complicate the development of sustainable tourism practices.

Resource Limitations

Financial constraints are a formidable obstacle for many businesses aiming to implement green tourism practices. Managers from various sectors, including ecotourism spaces, transport companies, and hotels, emphasize that the high costs associated with sustainable practices, such as waste separation and the use of green technologies, are not sufficiently offset by government incentives or support. For instance, the implementation of garbage separation systems and alternative energy sources like solar power requires substantial investment, which many businesses cannot afford.

The Georgian National Tourism Administration (GNTA) also faces resource limitations, particularly in maintaining hiking trails. Limited staff and resources, coupled with issues like vandalism, make it difficult to manage these trails effectively.

Market Demand and Awareness

The demand for green tourism services from key source markets is relatively low, particularly from post-Soviet Union countries where awareness of sustainable tourism practices is limited. This lack of demand reduces the incentive for businesses to invest in green tourism products. Hotel managers and other stakeholders report that continuous education and awareness-raising among employees and other stakeholders are necessary but increase operational costs and complicate the implementation of green initiatives.

Infrastructure and Qualified Personnel

The development and maintenance of necessary infrastructure for green tourism pose significant challenges. There is a shortage of qualified personnel, such as experienced guides, rangers, and rescue workers, who are essential for providing high-quality, sustainable tourism experiences. Furthermore, the scarcity of suppliers of green technology and the difficulty in establishing contracts for services like waste management impede progress.

Waste and Sewage Management

Effective waste management remains one of the most pressing issues in Georgia's tourism sector. Illegal dumping and inadequate waste separation practices are widespread, undermining efforts to promote sustainability. Businesses and municipalities have begun implementing waste separation systems, but inconsistent and ineffective waste management infrastructure undermines these initiatives.

Sewage management is particularly critical for hotels outside urban areas. While some have installed modern systems to clean water sewage for reuse in irrigation, many villages still struggle with this issue, highlighting the need for comprehensive infrastructure development.

Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing

A lack of knowledge and expertise in green tourism is a significant barrier. While some businesses benefit from international workshops and collaborations, more systematic knowledge sharing is needed. For instance, landscape architecture is identified as a critical area where expertise is lacking. Collaborative efforts, such as meetings and shared experiences among wineries in the Imereti region, have proven beneficial, but such initiatives need to be expanded and supported more broadly.

Unequal Distribution of Tourists

Regions like Adjara, Kakheti, and Imereti experience unequal distribution of tourists, creating pressure on a few popular locations while leaving other areas underutilized. This imbalance affects the sustainability of these destinations and highlights the need for better promotion and distribution of tourist flows.

To summarize, the development of green tourism in Georgia faces multiple interrelated challenges that require concerted efforts from the government, private sector, and civil society. Addressing these challenges involves improving government support and policy frameworks, increasing financial and technical resources, raising awareness and demand for green tourism, enhancing infrastructure and personnel training, and establishing robust regulatory frameworks.

2.4. Future Needs and Opportunities in Green Tourism Development of Georgia

As Georgia aims to position itself as a leading destination for green tourism, understanding the future needs and opportunities in this sector is crucial. Stakeholders across the tourism industry—from tour operators and hotel managers to local government officials and community members—highlight the importance of raising awareness, implementing sustainable practices, securing funding, and fostering continuous improvement. This

chapter explores the key areas that need attention and development to ensure the sustainable growth of green tourism in Georgia.

Increasing Awareness and Education

The primary focus for the future of green tourism in Georgia should be on raising awareness and education. Many industry professionals, such as those with experience in guiding German-speaking visitors, note that sustainability practices were not covered in their formal education, making practical implementation challenging. There is a need for more comprehensive educational programs that include lectures, seminars, and practical experiences focused on environmental care and sustainability. Additionally, engaging youth through eco-education and green tourism routes can foster a new generation of environmentally conscious citizens.

Practical Implementation and Best Practices

While theoretical knowledge is important, practical implementation is crucial for the development of green tourism. Professionals recommend highlighting best practices from the EU, allowing local stakeholders to visit specific locations or view detailed descriptions and video recordings of successful implementations. Sharing local success stories can also inspire and guide others in the region. Practical examples and step-by-step guides on implementing green tourism concepts in various sectors—hotels, tour operators, and transportation—can provide the necessary support for effective adoption.

Funding and Investment

Access to funding and investment is vital to support green tourism initiatives. Grants and loans for businesses developing eco-friendly products, as well as sustainability requirements for donor-funded projects and foreign direct investments, should align with green tourism goals. Financial support is also crucial for agricultural development, as tourism is interconnected with other sectors of the economy. Ensuring that funding opportunities are accessible and aligned with sustainability will help drive the growth of green tourism.

Continuous Improvement and Innovation

Continuous improvement through research and development is essential for advancing green tourism. Ongoing research to explore new sustainable practices and products is needed, along with active involvement from local communities and consistent government support. Engaging youth in green initiatives, raising public awareness, and fostering innovation through sharing experiences and best practices from EU countries will help keep the sector dynamic and progressive.

Linking Price Strategy with Environmental Efforts

Adopting a price strategy that links environmental efforts with travel costs can incentivize sustainable practices. For instance, charging higher prices for travelers from distant locations due to the associated pollution, as seen at events like ITB Berlin, could be introduced in the Georgian market. This approach can help mitigate environmental impacts and promote greener travel options.

Infrastructure and Community Involvement

The development of infrastructure is critical for the success of green tourism. Issues such as lack of parking spaces, inadequate transportation, and insufficient accommodation

need to be addressed. Additionally, promoting community involvement in green initiatives, from maintaining cleanliness to participating in greening actions, is essential. Local government support and the development of a regulatory legal framework for green tourism will provide the necessary structure and incentives for sustainable development.

Marketing and Positioning

Marketing green tourism as a key component of Georgia's tourism strategy can attract high-spending visitors who value sustainability. Establishing criteria for green hotels and other services, similar to platforms like Booking.com, can enhance Georgia's appeal to environmentally conscious tourists. Emphasizing green practices as part of a broader marketing campaign will help position Georgia as a leading green tourism destination.

Addressing Specific Regional Needs

Different regions in Georgia have unique opportunities and challenges in developing green tourism. For instance, Kakheti's diverse nature, traditions, and seasonal products present significant potential. However, issues like infrastructure deficits and lack of awareness need to be addressed. Specific projects related to green tourism in rural areas, sharing successful practices, and developing comprehensive action plans based on regional needs and challenges are essential steps for future growth.

In conclusion, the future of green tourism in Georgia depends on a multifaceted approach that includes increasing awareness and education, practical implementation of best practices, securing funding and investment, fostering continuous improvement and innovation, linking price strategies with environmental efforts, improving infrastructure, promoting community involvement, and effectively marketing and positioning the country as a green tourism destination.

3. Moldova

3.1. Situational Analysis

Moldova is increasingly recognized for its potential in developing sustainable tourism, driven by its diverse landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and commitment to eco-friendly practices. This combination makes it an appealing destination for travelers seeking authentic and environmentally responsible experiences.

Moldova has proactively pursued sustainable tourism initiatives in collaboration with international bodies like the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) [6]. This partnership aims to align Moldova's tourism practices with global sustainability standards, enhancing its reputation as a green tourism destination.

Locally, the National Inbound and Domestic Tourism Association of Moldova (ANTRIM) launched the "Commitment to Sustainability" program to encourage local tourism businesses to adopt sustainable practices [7]. Supported by government policies such as the National Strategy for Tourism Development [8], Moldova is laying a foundation for sustainable tourism growth.

Moldova offers several attractions that cater to green tourism principles. The Orheiul Vechi Archaeological Complex stands out for its natural beauty and historical significance, offering visitors a glimpse into Moldova's rich heritage [9]. Similarly, the Eco Resort

Butuceni provides an immersive experience in traditional Moldovan culture while promoting eco-friendly practices [9].

Central to Moldova's sustainable tourism strategy is wine tourism. Wineries like Cricova, Milestii Mici, and Purcari not only offer tours and tastings but also prioritize sustainable viticulture practices, showcasing their commitment to environmental stewardship [10].

Despite its potential, Moldova faces challenges in fully realizing its green tourism ambitions. Rural infrastructure remains underdeveloped, hindering access to ecotourism sites. Improving transportation and accommodation facilities is crucial to making these destinations more accessible to tourists [11]. Additionally, raising awareness among local communities and businesses about the benefits of sustainable tourism is essential, with initiatives like GSTC training programs playing a pivotal role [6].

Moldova's diverse landscapes and rich biodiversity present ample opportunities for eco-tourism. Nature reserves and protected areas such as the "Plaiul Fagului" Scientific Reserve underscore Moldova's commitment to environmental conservation, offering activities like hiking and birdwatching [12].

Cultural heritage also plays a significant role in Moldova's tourism appeal. Festivals like GUSTAR and DescOPERA celebrate local traditions while adhering to sustainable event management practices, promoting cultural exchange and preservation.

The Autonomous Territorial Unit (ATU) of Gagauzia has been proactive in promoting sustainable tourism through its Regional Sector Program (RSP) for 2019-2025. This program outlines strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing tourism infrastructure and services, making Gagauzia more attractive to domestic and international tourists [13].

Gagauzia offers unique attractions that contribute to its green tourism appeal. The Gagauz Museum of History and Ethnography provides insights into local culture and traditions, enriching visitor experiences [14]. Wineries like Tomai Vinex and Vinuri de Comrat promote sustainable wine production practices, while the ethnic complex Gagauz Sofrasi offers an authentic cultural and culinary journey [15][16]. Development of eco-friendly sports and recreation complexes further enhances the overall visitor experience in Gagauzia [13].

Moldova's commitment to developing sustainable tourism is evident through its national policies, partnerships with international organizations, and regional initiatives. Despite existing challenges, Moldova's natural and cultural assets provide a solid foundation for sustainable tourism development. The proactive measures taken by regions like Gagauzia demonstrate the potential for green tourism to contribute significantly to Moldova's economic growth and environmental conservation efforts.

3.2. Current Practices and Success Factors in Green Tourism Development of Moldova

In the pursuit of green tourism, a diverse range of organizations and businesses are contributing to sustainable development through innovative practices and strategic approaches. This chapter reviews the current practices and success factors of key players in the green tourism sector, illustrating their achievements and the impact of their efforts on sustainability and enhanced visitor experiences.

National tourism associations play a pivotal role in promoting the country as a green tourism destination. They actively participate in tourism fairs and collaborate with travel agencies specializing in eco-friendly travel, amplifying green tourism offerings. By leveraging digital platforms to showcase eco-friendly businesses and destinations, they

significantly enhance their reach and impact. Their success is driven by effective leadership, a strong commitment to sustainability, and collaborative strategies that involve various stakeholders. Additionally, educational programs empower tourism businesses with the knowledge and resources needed to adopt green practices, cementing the associations' role as key contributors to sustainable tourism development.

Meanwhile, **eco-resorts** exemplify sustainable hospitality through their commitment to environmental stewardship. These resorts embrace sustainable building and design practices and implement water conservation measures, partnering with local farmers to engage guests in eco-friendly activities. Their holistic approach to sustainability, combined with unique locations and natural appeal, attracts eco-conscious travelers seeking authentic retreats. Effective marketing and positive guest feedback have earned these resorts recognition for their sustainability efforts, establishing them as premier eco-friendly destinations.

Travel companies offer immersive experiences that celebrate the country's rich culture and heritage. Through creative tour itineraries and meticulous planning, they provide travelers with authentic insights into local traditions. These companies' success is rooted in unique tour offerings, motivated teams, and a strong reputation for quality and customer satisfaction. By captivating travelers with enriching experiences, they have carved out a distinctive niche in the tourism industry.

Sustainable travel agencies prioritize eco-friendly travel by promoting eco-destinations and tourism in biodiverse areas. They collaborate closely with local communities to develop programs that respect nature and provide equitable opportunities. Despite some local reluctance, external customers show enthusiasm for eco-tourism, indicating the agencies' success. Their success factors include a fundamental commitment to sustainability, well-trained staff, and transparent communication with customers.

Scientific reservations serve as vital hubs for ecological research and sustainable tourism. They offer educational programs and promote conservation, inviting visitors to engage with natural beauty while fostering environmental stewardship. The success of these reservations is attributed to their rich biodiversity and educational opportunities, which attract researchers and nature enthusiasts alike. Their dedication to conservation efforts inspires visitors to cherish and protect the natural heritage.

Monasteries draw pilgrims and travelers seeking spiritual solace and cultural immersion. Known for their architectural splendor and serene natural settings, these monasteries provide transformative experiences steeped in history and tradition. Through religious tourism and cultural outreach, they share the country's heritage with a broad audience. Their success is based on architectural beauty, spiritual atmosphere, and a commitment to preserving cultural heritage, enriching the lives of pilgrims and travelers.

In the wine country, **wineries** excel in both winemaking and hospitality, offering guided tours, tastings, and culinary experiences. These wineries provide sensory journeys through the viticultural heritage, combining innovation with a legacy of quality. Their success is rooted in a commitment to tradition and in creating comprehensive visitor experiences that celebrate the winemaking legacy. A focus on quality and hospitality continues to delight wine enthusiasts and connoisseurs, embodying the spirit of hospitality.

Rural guesthouses offer sustainable and tranquil retreats. These guesthouses, through sustainable construction practices, organic farming, and educational programs, connect travelers with nature and local culture. Their success lies in their dedication to sustainability and guest experience, offering holistic retreats that nourish the body, mind, and soul.

These guesthouses inspire travelers seeking authentic and enriching escapes, with a focus on environmental stewardship and rural charm.

Small-scale wineries emphasize eco-friendly practices in tours and activities, focusing on respecting the environment and promoting green initiatives. Their success lies in transparent practices and active community involvement, promoting collaboration and environmental responsibility. Factors contributing to their success include favorable natural conditions for vine growing, a commitment to sustainable practices, and a focus on tourism experiences that highlight the ecological aspects of wine production. Valuable practices include adopting sustainable farming practices and collaborating with environmental organizations for enhanced sustainability efforts.

Tourism offices are pivotal in promoting eco-tourism, providing comprehensive information to both domestic and international audiences through extensive online platforms. Their success lies in effectively informing potential customers about ecological tourism opportunities, capitalizing on the growing interest in eco-friendly travel. Their structured organization consolidates tourism stakeholders for enhanced promotion and coordination.

Ecological societies are actively engaged in eco-tourism, focusing on environmental protection and green tourism promotion. Their initiatives, such as developing eco-tourism trails, attract tourists seeking authentic nature experiences. By involving local communities in eco-tourism projects, these societies foster a sense of ownership and respond to the increasing market demand for eco-friendly travel. Collaborative partnerships with local authorities and environmental organizations amplify their impact, highlighting the importance of collective action in advancing eco-tourism.

Community centers and guesthouses offer eco-friendly hospitality through ecological construction, outdoor recreation, and organic food sourcing. Located in picturesque settings, they leverage their natural surroundings to provide sustainable services. Collaborative efforts with local producers and attractions enrich their eco-tourism offerings, and embracing technology enhances their operational efficiency and sustainability, offering immersive eco-tourism experiences.

In conclusion, the tourism ventures reviewed in this chapter collectively represent a harmonious blend of environmental sustainability, cultural preservation, and innovative practices. Their success is attributed to experienced management, community engagement, the adoption of international practices, and a strong commitment to eco-tourism. As the green tourism sector continues to evolve, these stakeholders serve as inspirations, guiding the way toward a more sustainable and resilient tourism industry. Their efforts not only enhance the attractiveness of tourism offerings but also contribute to the broader goal of sustainable development, setting a standard for future initiatives in green tourism.

3.3. Challenges Faced in Green Tourism Development of Moldova

Green tourism in Moldova holds promise, yet various entities across the industry encounter formidable obstacles hindering its growth. This chapter delves deeper into the multifaceted challenges highlighted by stakeholders in Moldova's green tourism sector, drawing insights from their experiences and perspectives. The following challenges were identified:

Moldova's regulatory framework poses significant hurdles for green tourism in general, lacking tailored provisions for sustainable practices. Stakeholders struggle to

align their operations with existing laws and regulations, which often do not address the specific needs and complexities of green tourism.

Examples:

- Association underscores the absence of regulations catering to green tourism's specific needs. They face challenges in obtaining permits and complying with environmental regulations.
- Ethno-Touristic Complex echoes concern about regulatory ambiguities hindering eco-friendly initiatives. The complex encounters difficulties in obtaining licenses for eco-tours and implementing sustainable practices due to unclear regulatory guidelines.

Inadequate infrastructure impedes the seamless operation of green tourism initiatives, ranging from transportation networks to accommodation facilities. Stakeholders face challenges in accessing remote areas, lack of eco-friendly accommodations, and insufficient facilities for outdoor activities, hampering the development of sustainable tourism experiences.

Examples:

- The Regional Tourist Information Center notes the lack of infrastructure to support green tourism services, including hiking trails and eco-routes. They struggle to promote eco-tourism due to inadequate facilities and poorly maintained hiking trails.
- The Winery highlights the need for significant investment in infrastructure for transporting and accommodating tourists sustainably. They face challenges in accessing remote vineyard locations and lack eco-friendly accommodations for visitors.

Securing adequate funding remains a persistent challenge, limiting the implementation of sustainable practices and infrastructure development. Stakeholders encounter difficulties in accessing financing options, attracting investors, and demonstrating the long-term economic viability of green tourism projects.

Examples:

- The Winery emphasizes the crucial role of investment in sustainable infrastructure projects. They struggle to secure funding for renewable energy systems and eco-friendly building materials due to limited access to financial resources.
- Association identifies the challenge of aligning sustainability goals with profitability. They face difficulties in attracting investors for eco-friendly initiatives and struggle to demonstrate the economic benefits of sustainable practices to stakeholders.

There is a notable lack of awareness and education among tourists and local communities regarding green tourism principles and benefits. Stakeholders face challenges in promoting environmental conservation, responsible travel behavior, and sustainable tourism practices, leading to a disconnect between industry efforts and public understanding.

Examples:

- The Regional Tourist Information Center stresses the need for constant educational efforts to raise awareness about green tourism among tourists. They struggle to engage visitors in sustainability initiatives due to limited awareness of eco-friendly practices and their benefits.

- The Winery underscores ongoing efforts to educate staff and tourists on sustainable practices. They conduct eco-tours and workshops to raise awareness about environmental conservation and promote responsible wine tourism.

Engaging local communities in green tourism initiatives is essential but challenging, requiring support and cooperation. Stakeholders face difficulties in gaining community buy-in, addressing socio-economic concerns, and fostering partnerships with local businesses and organizations to promote sustainable tourism development.

Examples:

- Ethno-Touristic Complex highlights the difficulty in involving local communities in decision-making processes and revenue-sharing arrangements. They struggle to engage residents in eco-tourism initiatives due to limited economic opportunities and cultural barriers.
- The Winery underscores the challenge of gaining community support for green initiatives. They face locals' opposition to conservation efforts and struggle to involve communities in sustainable tourism projects.

Moldova faces obstacles in effectively marketing itself as a green tourism destination, hindering efforts to attract eco-conscious travelers. Stakeholders encounter difficulties in positioning the country as a sustainable tourism destination, promoting green tourism experiences, and reaching target audiences through marketing and promotional activities.

Examples:

- The Complex emphasizes the struggle to reach eco-conscious travelers due to limited marketing resources and visibility. They face challenges in promoting eco-tourism packages and attracting environmentally conscious tourists to the region.
- The Winery underscores challenges in positioning themselves as sustainable tourism destinations amidst global competition. They struggle to differentiate themselves in the market and raise awareness about their eco-friendly initiatives.

While some state support exists, there is a need for comprehensive government backing to drive green tourism development. Stakeholders face challenges in accessing government grants and subsidies, navigating bureaucratic processes, and advocating for policy reforms to support sustainable tourism practices and infrastructure development.

Examples:

- The Winery and Association highlight the challenge of accessing government grants and subsidies for sustainability projects. They struggle to obtain financial support for eco-friendly initiatives due to limited government funding.
- The Complex and Association underscore regulatory barriers and bureaucratic hurdles in obtaining permits for eco-friendly initiatives. They face challenges in complying with environmental regulations and obtaining licenses for sustainable tourism projects.

In confronting these challenges, Moldova can chart a path toward sustainable tourism growth, leveraging its natural and cultural assets while addressing critical obstacles. By fostering collaboration, promoting awareness, and advocating for supportive policies, stakeholders can work together to overcome barriers and unlock the full potential of green tourism in Moldova.

3.4. Future Needs and Opportunities in Green Tourism Development of Moldova

Green tourism is increasingly recognized as a vital component of sustainable development. In Moldova, various stakeholders from different sectors are actively contributing to its growth. This chapter explores the future needs and opportunities in green tourism development, providing a comprehensive overview based on insights from key industry players, including hotels, equestrian sports complexes, ethno-cultural tourism providers, regional tourist information centers, wineries, museums, tourism associations, natural sites, guesthouses, travel agencies, and ecological societies. Moldova's stakeholders in green tourism emphasize several key needs and opportunities to ensure sustainable growth and attract environmentally conscious visitors.

Sustainable Practices and Cultural Integration- Equestrian sports and tourist complexes in Moldova highlight the necessity for sustainable land and waste management practices. They also stress the importance of integrating local cultures, such as Moldavian and Gagauzian traditions, into their tourism offerings. These complexes see significant potential in offering unique cultural immersion experiences. By promoting regions like Gagauzia as prime destinations for horse tourism and investing in staff training, they can enhance the overall quality of their offerings and attract more visitors interested in authentic cultural experiences. Developing robust safety plans and protocols for hazards and disease outbreaks is also essential to ensure the well-being of both visitors and animals.

Preservation and Eco-Friendly Transportation- Ethno-cultural tourism providers focus on preserving cultural heritage and the natural environment. They advocate for promoting eco-friendly transportation and waste reduction to align with global efforts against climate change and biodiversity loss. Facilitating meaningful interactions between visitors and local communities is crucial for offering authentic and immersive cultural experiences. These stakeholders see significant opportunities in attracting environmentally conscious travelers and developing new tour packages and workshops. By educating visitors and locals on cultural and environmental preservation, they can stimulate economic growth and support small businesses and artisans.

Demand Research and Infrastructure Development- Regional tourist information centers play a vital role in promoting green tourism. Understanding tourist preferences and interests through comprehensive demand research is crucial for developing effective marketing strategies. These centers emphasize the need for creating hiking trails, bicycle paths, and camping sites to attract tourists interested in outdoor activities and nature-based experiences. Opportunities identified by stakeholders include generating additional income for regional centers and residents, boosting small and medium-sized businesses, and increasing tourists' awareness of local cultural and environmental values. By enhancing infrastructure and fostering intercultural understanding, regional tourist information centers can improve the overall quality of life for residents and create a more attractive environment for visitors.

Technological Upgrades and Unique Experiences- Wine tourism is a significant aspect of Moldova's green tourism sector. Wineries stress the need for technological upgrades, such as updating equipment and introducing modern technologies, to improve their operations and sustainability practices. Creating new tourism programs and services is essential to attract more visitors and provide unique experiences. The opportunities in wine tourism include offering master classes, virtual tours, and immersive wine experiences that highlight traditional winemaking practices and local customs. By supporting local entrepreneurs and promoting regional development, wineries can make substantial economic contributions. Implementing sustainable practices, such as water

conservation and waste management, can also attract environmentally conscious tourists and enhance the overall appeal of wine tourism in Moldova.

Funding and Digital Engagement- Museums and cultural institutions highlight the need for adequate funding to ensure maintenance and development. Regular repairs and renovations, along with investing in staff training and development, are critical to maintaining high standards and offering enriching experiences to visitors. Integrating digital tools for virtual tours and exhibits is also recognized to broaden access and engage a wider audience. Stakeholders identify several opportunities in this sector, including developing specialized tours and workshops that cater to cultural tourism. Forming partnerships with educational institutions and tourism agencies can enhance the reach and impact of museums and cultural institutions. By leveraging social media and digital platforms, these institutions can attract more visitors and promote eco-friendly measures to appeal to environmentally conscious tourists.

Training and Resources- Tourism associations emphasize the need for providing training and resources to tourism businesses, advocating for policies that support eco-friendly practices, and collaborating on sustainable infrastructure projects. Establishing systems to track environmental impact is essential for monitoring progress and making informed decisions. The opportunities in this sector include embracing digital marketing and smart energy systems to enhance sustainability efforts. Promoting specialized tourism segments, such as agrotourism, ecotourism, and cultural tourism, can attract diverse tourist groups. By developing community-based tourism initiatives, tourism associations can support local communities and promote sustainable development. Accessing expertise and funding from global organizations and supporting innovation in sustainable tourism are also recognized as key opportunities.

Eco-Friendly Infrastructure- Managers of natural and historical sites emphasize the need for creating eco-friendly trails and visitor centers, implementing recycling and composting initiatives, and utilizing renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power. Engaging local communities in tourism activities is essential for ensuring that tourism benefits are shared widely. Opportunities in this sector include offering nature-based activities such as birdwatching, wildlife observation, and forest bathing. Partnering with NGOs for conservation projects and collaborating with local farms to offer unique agrotourism experiences can enhance the appeal of natural and historical sites. By focusing on conservation efforts and promoting sustainable practices, these sites can attract environmentally conscious tourists and contribute to broader sustainability goals.

Waste Reduction and Water Conservation- Guesthouses and resorts highlight the need for implementing waste reduction practices, such as composting and reducing single-use plastics, and installing water-saving fixtures and systems. Enhancing social media presence and online booking systems is also essential for attracting a wider audience and improving customer engagement. The opportunities identified by stakeholders include offering specialized eco-tours that focus on local crafts and sustainable practices, organizing farm-to-table dinners and cooking classes, and providing wellness programs such as yoga, meditation, and digital detox retreats. By collaborating with local artisans and businesses, guesthouses and resorts can create unique and authentic experiences for visitors, contributing to the overall growth of green tourism in Moldova.

Ecotourism Promotion- Travel agencies emphasize the importance of leveraging natural beauty and cultural diversity to promote ecotourism. Supporting local economies and preserving traditions through community-based tourism is seen as essential for sustainable development. Raising awareness about the benefits of green tourism among both visitors and locals is also highlighted as a key priority. Stakeholders in this sector recognize the opportunities in developing and implementing sustainable practices,

collaborating effectively with various stakeholders, and promoting the benefits of sustainable tourism. By focusing on resource conservation and encouraging government support for ecotourism projects, travel agencies can play a crucial role in the growth of green tourism in Moldova.

Strategic Partnerships- Ecological societies highlight the need for collaboration with environmental organizations, local authorities, communities, and private sectors to promote sustainable development in tourism. They stress the importance of understanding the impacts of tourism activities and implementing sustainable practices. Compliance with tourism and environmental laws and regulations is essential to ensure that tourism growth does not come at the environment's expense. The opportunities identified by these stakeholders include forming alliances with government agencies, businesses, and NGOs to enhance sustainability efforts. By promoting cultural and ecotourism, ecological societies can attract a diverse range of tourists and support rural communities.

Resource Management- Hotels and resorts with significant experience in the tourism industry emphasize the importance of resource management, including efficient use of energy, water, and waste. They recognize the need for sustainable construction, renewable energy, and efficient resource management to enhance the sustainability of their operations. By offering diverse experiences that enhance natural and cultural diversity, these establishments can provide authentic guest experiences and improve the overall appeal of their offerings. Strategic partnerships with public and private sectors, NGOs, and local communities are also seen as crucial for promoting sustainable development in the tourism sector.

The future of green tourism development in Moldova is promising, with various stakeholders actively working to address key needs and capitalize on opportunities. By focusing on sustainable practices, cultural integration, eco-friendly infrastructure, and strategic partnerships, Moldova can attract environmentally conscious tourists and support local communities. The insights from equestrian sports complexes, ethno-cultural tourism providers, regional tourist information centers, wineries, museums, tourism associations, natural sites, guesthouses, travel agencies, and ecological societies highlight the diverse and collaborative efforts needed to drive sustainable tourism growth in the country.

4. SWOT Analysis and Recommendations

4.1. SWOT Analysis of Green Tourism Development in Georgia

Strengths	Weaknesses
Diverse Natural Attractions: Georgia's diverse attractions such as the Caucasus Mountains and the Black Sea coastline make it an ideal destination for green tourism.	Infrastructure Gaps: Rapid increase in tourism has outpaced infrastructure development, particularly in waste management and wastewater treatment.
Cultural Heritage: The country's rich history, including its 8,000-year-old winemaking tradition and unique cuisine, adds significant value to green tourism.	Limited Government Support: Lack of robust legislative frameworks and government mandates hinders broader adoption of sustainable practices.
Growing Awareness: Increasing awareness among local businesses and tourists about sustainable practices drives the demand for green tourism.	Resource Constraints: Financial limitations and high costs associated with implementing green technologies pose challenges for many businesses.
Rich Biodiversity: Georgia's well-preserved ecosystems and extensive biodiversity offer a strong foundation for ecotourism.	Awareness and Knowledge: Inconsistent understanding and execution of green tourism principles across the industry hinders cohesive development.
Commitment to Sustainability: Georgia's "Ecotourism Strategy 2020-2030" and Tourism Strategy 2025 emphasize biodiversity conservation, community engagement, and sustainable infrastructure, promoting the country as a leading ecotourism destination.	Regulatory Deficiencies: The absence of comprehensive regulations and certification systems for green tourism practices impacts standardization and enforcement.
Opportunities	Threats
Strategic Policies: The "Ecotourism Strategy for Georgia 2020-2030" offers a strategic framework for sustainable tourism development.	Environmental Impact: Rapidly increasing visitor numbers risk environmental degradation without proper sustainable management.
High-Value Tourism: Targeting high-spending tourists seeking unique and environmentally conscious experiences can diversify and enhance tourism offerings.	Economic Challenges: Broader economic issues, such as inadequate waste management systems and resource constraints, impede green tourism progress.
Investment in Infrastructure: There are opportunities to invest in eco-friendly infrastructure such as waste management facilities and renewable energy sources.	Climate Change: Climate change and related environmental challenges pose risks to Georgia's natural attractions and tourism infrastructure.

Promotion of Local Products: Emphasizing local, organic, and homemade products can enhance the authenticity and sustainability of tourism experiences.	Market Competition: Competing destinations with advanced sustainable tourism practices could attract eco-conscious tourists away from Georgia.
Community Engagement: Engaging local communities in tourism planning and development ensures inclusive benefits and fosters local support for green tourism initiatives.	Regulatory Uncertainty: Inconsistent enforcement of environmental regulations and lack of standardized guidelines for green tourism create uncertainty for businesses.

Based on the SWOT analysis General Recommendations were elaborated.

4.2. General Recommendations for Georgia

1. Strengthen Infrastructure Development

- Invest in eco-friendly infrastructure such as waste management systems, renewable energy sources, and public transportation to reduce the environmental impact of tourism.
- Improve accessibility to natural attractions and enhance visitor facilities to support sustainable tourism.

2. Enhance Government Support and Policy Frameworks

- Develop and enforce robust legislative frameworks and certification systems to standardize green tourism practices.
- Provide incentives and support for businesses adopting sustainable practices, including grants or subsidies for eco-friendly initiatives.

3. Promote Community Engagement and Local Benefits

- Engage local communities in tourism planning and development to ensure benefits are distributed inclusively and encourage community support for sustainability initiatives.
- Foster local entrepreneurship in green tourism by promoting local products and services and integrating cultural heritage into tourism offerings.

4. Raise Awareness and Knowledge

- Launch awareness campaigns to educate both tourists and local communities about the principles and benefits of green tourism.
- Develop educational materials and workshops for tourism stakeholders on sustainable practices and the economic, social, and environmental benefits of green tourism.

5. Foster International Cooperation and Best Practices

- Collaborate with international organizations and EU countries to adopt and adapt best practices in sustainable tourism.
- Facilitate knowledge exchange through workshops, study tours, and partnerships with successful green tourism destinations.

6. Mitigate Environmental Impacts

- Implement strict environmental management practices to mitigate the adverse effects of increased tourism, such as waste reduction, water conservation, and biodiversity protection.
- Promote climate resilience strategies to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change on tourism infrastructure and natural attractions.

7. Enhance Marketing and Promotion

- Develop and market Georgia as a premier green tourism destination by highlighting its natural beauty, cultural heritage, and commitment to sustainability.
- Create branding initiatives that emphasize eco-friendly tourism experiences and target high-spending tourists seeking sustainable travel options.

4.3. SWOT Analysis of Green Tourism Development in Moldova

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Rich Cultural and Natural Heritage: Moldova boasts a diverse array of cultural and natural attractions suitable for green tourism. Sites like the Orheiul Vechi Archaeological Complex and the Eco Resort Butuceni provide unique experiences that blend natural beauty with historical significance.</p>	<p>Inadequate Infrastructure: Infrastructure development, particularly in rural areas, remains a critical issue. Limited access to transportation and accommodation facilities hinders the accessibility and appeal of ecotourism sites.</p>
<p>Commitment to Sustainability: The Ministry of Culture and ANTRIM's initiatives reflect a strong national commitment to developing sustainable tourism. These include partnerships with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) and the "Commitment to Sustainability" program.</p>	<p>Regulatory Challenges: The regulatory framework lacks tailored provisions for green tourism, creating challenges in obtaining permits and aligning with environmental regulations.</p>
<p>Wine Tourism: Wineries such as Cricova and Milestii Mici not only enhance Moldova's appeal through their wine tourism but also emphasize sustainable practices in viticulture.</p>	<p>Limited Awareness: There is a notable lack of awareness and education among local communities and tourists regarding the benefits and principles of sustainable tourism.</p>
<p>Scientific Reserves and Biodiversity: The presence of scientific reserves like "Plaiul Fagului" offers significant opportunities for eco-tourism, including hiking and educational tours, which promote environmental conservation.</p>	<p>Funding Constraints: Securing adequate funding for sustainable infrastructure and practices is a persistent challenge, limiting the implementation of green tourism initiatives.</p>

Opportunities	Threats
Expansion of Green Tourism Activities: Moldova's diverse landscapes and cultural heritage present numerous opportunities for developing eco-tourism activities such as hiking, bird watching, and cultural festivals.	Environmental Degradation: Potential negative impacts of increased tourism on natural sites could pose a threat to Moldova's biodiversity and ecological integrity if not managed sustainably.
Educational Programs: Initiatives like GSTC training programs can bridge the gap in awareness and provide stakeholders with the knowledge to implement sustainable practices.	Economic Viability: Demonstrating the long-term economic benefits of sustainable practices can be challenging, making it difficult to attract investment and secure funding.
Promotion of Cultural Heritage: Festivals like GUSTAR and DescOPERA can be leveraged to promote cultural exchange and sustainable event management, enhancing Moldova's appeal as a green tourism destination.	Competitive Market: The global competition in attracting eco-conscious travelers may limit Moldova's market share if the country fails to effectively position itself as a leading green tourism destination.
Digital and Technological Integration: Enhancing digital platforms and integrating technologies for virtual tours, eco-friendly marketing, and efficient resource management can broaden access and engagement.	Government Support and Bureaucracy: Limited access to government grants and bureaucratic hurdles in obtaining permits for eco-friendly initiatives may slow down the development and implementation of green tourism projects.
Strategic Partnerships: Forming alliances with environmental organizations, local authorities, and the private sector can enhance sustainability efforts and support local communities.	

Based on the SWOT analysis General Recommendations were elaborated.

4.4. General Recommendations for Moldova

1. Enhance Infrastructure and Accessibility

- **Invest in Infrastructure Development:** Improve transportation networks, including roads and eco-friendly transport options, especially to rural and ecotourism sites. Enhance basic amenities such as restrooms, signage, and accommodation facilities to meet sustainable standards.
- **Develop Eco-Friendly Accommodation:** Promote the development of eco-lodges, campsites, and guesthouses that use sustainable building practices and renewable energy. Encourage existing accommodations to adopt eco-certifications and green practices.

2. Strengthen Regulatory and Policy Framework

- **Create Tailored Regulations:** Develop specific regulations for green tourism that streamline the process of obtaining permits and align with environmental

conservation goals. Introduce incentives for businesses that adopt sustainable practices.

- **Enhance Compliance and Enforcement:** Ensure strict enforcement of environmental laws and tourism regulations. Establish clear guidelines and support mechanisms for tourism operators to comply with sustainable practices.

3. Promote Sustainable Practices Among Stakeholders

- **Educate and Train:** Implement training programs for tourism operators, local businesses, and communities on sustainable tourism practices, waste management, and energy conservation. Partner with educational institutions to integrate sustainability into tourism-related curriculums.
- **Foster Community Involvement:** Engage local communities in tourism planning and development. Provide platforms for their input and participation in tourism activities, ensuring that benefits are shared equitably.

4. Leverage Digital Tools and Marketing

- **Enhance Online Presence:** Use digital platforms to promote green tourism destinations, eco-friendly accommodations, and sustainable travel experiences. Develop a central portal for green tourism in Moldova that offers comprehensive information and booking options.
- **Develop Targeted Marketing Campaigns:** Create marketing campaigns that highlight Moldova's unique eco-tourism opportunities, such as wine tours, cultural festivals, and nature reserves. Use storytelling and visuals to appeal to eco-conscious travelers.

5. Support Sustainable Business Models

- **Facilitate Access to Funding:** Establish funding mechanisms and grants to support sustainable tourism projects. Encourage partnerships between public and private sectors to invest in green infrastructure and tourism businesses.
- **Promote Green Certifications:** Encourage tourism businesses to obtain eco-certifications and awards. Provide support and resources to help them meet the criteria for these certifications.

6. Expand Green Tourism Products and Services

- **Develop Diverse Eco-Tourism Offerings:** Expand the range of eco-tourism activities such as hiking, bird watching, agro-tourism, and cultural immersion experiences. Create specialized packages that combine these activities to offer unique visitor experiences.
- **Highlight Local Culture and Traditions:** Integrate local cultural heritage into green tourism offerings. Promote festivals, workshops, and tours that allow tourists to experience traditional crafts, cuisine, and customs.

7. Enhance Conservation and Environmental Protection

- **Establish Protected Areas:** Increase the number and size of protected areas and nature reserves. Promote conservation efforts in these areas, ensuring that tourist activities do not harm the environment.
- **Promote Sustainable Agriculture:** Encourage wineries and farms to adopt sustainable practices. Support agritourism initiatives that educate tourists about organic farming and sustainable viticulture.

8. Improve Awareness and Education Among Tourists

- **Create Awareness Campaigns:** Launch campaigns to educate tourists about the importance of sustainable tourism. Provide information on how to travel responsibly and reduce their environmental impact.
- **Offer Eco-Tourism Workshops:** Organize workshops and seminars for tourists on topics such as conservation, sustainable travel practices, and the benefits of green tourism.

9. Encourage Collaborative Efforts

- **Foster Partnerships:** Build partnerships between government agencies, NGOs, local communities, and private sector stakeholders. Collaborate on projects that enhance green tourism infrastructure, marketing, and sustainability practices.
- **Engage in Regional Initiatives:** Participate in regional and international green tourism networks to share best practices, gain insights, and attract international visitors interested in sustainable travel.

10. Monitor and Evaluate Impact

- **Track Environmental and Economic Impact:** Implement systems to monitor the environmental and economic impacts of green tourism initiatives. Use this data to make informed decisions and adjust strategies as needed.
- **Feedback Mechanism:** Develop feedback mechanisms to gather input from tourists and local communities on green tourism experiences. Use this feedback to improve services and address any emerging challenges.

4.5. Specific Recommendations Focusing on Training Topics for Green Tourism in Georgia and Moldova

1. Develop Training Programs on Green Practices

- **Topic: Fundamentals of Sustainable Tourism**
Develop training modules covering the basics of sustainable tourism, including principles of a circular economy, resource conservation, and the impact of tourism on local ecosystems.
- **Topic: Sustainable Business Models in Tourism**
Offer workshops on creating and managing sustainable tourism businesses, focusing on integrating eco-friendly practices, cost management, and marketing green tourism products.
- **Topic: Regulatory Frameworks and Certification**
Provide training on existing and emerging regulatory frameworks and certification processes for green tourism to ensure compliance and promote best practices.

2. Enhance Practical Skills through Case Studies and Best Practices

- **Topic: Case Studies on Successful Green Tourism Initiatives**
Present detailed case studies of successful green tourism projects within Georgia, Moldova and from EU countries, highlighting practical applications and outcomes.

- **Topic: Hands-On Workshops on Sustainable Tourism Practices**
Organize workshops where participants can engage in hands-on activities such as eco-friendly accommodation management, waste reduction techniques, and the development of sustainable tour packages.
- **Topic: Integration of Local Culture and Heritage**
Conduct training on incorporating local culture, traditions, and products into green tourism offerings, emphasizing the creation of unique and authentic visitor experiences.

3. Promote Certification and Standards Adoption

- **Topic: Green Tourism Certification Processes**
Educate stakeholders on the steps to obtain green tourism certifications, including criteria, benefits, and maintenance of certification standards.

4. Increase Stakeholder Knowledge on Environmental Management

- **Topic: Environmental Impact Assessment and Mitigation**
Provide training on conducting environmental impact assessments and developing strategies to mitigate the environmental impacts of tourism projects.
- **Topic: Climate Resilience and Sustainable Tourism**
Develop training on adapting tourism practices to climate change, focusing on resilience strategies and sustainable infrastructure design.

5. Implement Pilot Projects for Practical Learning

- **Topic: Pilot Green Tourism Projects**
Initiate small-scale green tourism projects that stakeholders can implement and manage, providing practical experience and demonstrating the feasibility and benefits of sustainable practices.
- **Topic: Community-Based Tourism Development**
Train stakeholders on developing community-based tourism initiatives that engage local populations, leverage local resources, and ensure community benefits.

6. Utilize Technology and Digital Tools for Education

- **Topic: Digital Platforms for Green Tourism Education**
Develop online platforms and resources for continuous learning on sustainable tourism practices, including e-learning modules, webinars, and virtual tours of green tourism sites.
- **Topic: Digital Marketing of Green Tourism**
Offer training on digital marketing strategies to promote green tourism experiences, utilizing social media, websites, and online booking platforms to reach eco-conscious travelers.

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Appendix: Questionnaire

Interview Guide (Interview Duration Approximately 40 Minutes)	Proposed Questions for Georgia and Moldova
Introduction (1-2 minutes)	<p>Thank you for participating in this interview for the ENRICHER-hubs project. Our goal is to bridge skills gaps between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and the labor market in Georgia and Moldova, specifically focusing on green tourism service development. Through innovative training, we aim to enhance competences in sustainable tourism and service design, fostering collaboration between universities and industries. This project not only improves student employability but also promotes sustainability, aligning with EU strategies for sustainable tourism.</p> <p>We're conducting this interview to gather insights into current practices and future needs in green tourism service concept design. Your input is invaluable in helping us understand the challenges and opportunities in this field. Green tourism, which focuses on minimizing environmental impacts, particularly in small-scale activities like ecotourism and nature tourism, plays a crucial role in addressing the needs of visitors, industry, and local communities. By emphasizing environmentally friendly practices, it not only enhances competitiveness but also promotes sustainability within the industry, ensuring a brighter future for tourism.</p> <p>We assure you that the interviews are anonymous. The materials collected through the interviews will be shared with the ENRICHER hubs project partners, keeping the answers anonymous, and the conclusions will be presented in a status quo analysis report, which will be public on the project's official page - https://www.enricher.eu/.</p>
Participant Background (1-2 minute)	<p>1. Which organization are you affiliated with?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Travel Agency</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Tour Company</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Hotel/Resort</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Tourism Board</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p> <p>2. What is your position within the organization?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Manager</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Coordinator</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Staff</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p> <p>3. How many years of experience do you have in the tourism industry?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 year</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 years</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 years</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> More than 10 years</p>

Current Practices and Success Factors (Maximum 10 minutes)	<p>4. Can you share insights on your experience and the organization's involvement in green tourism initiatives? This includes projects, roles, market insights, and successful initiatives.</p> <p><u>To Interviewer: You ask the question below if the organization is successful in developing green tourism service concepts.</u></p> <p>Additionally, what factors contribute to your success in developing eco-friendly service concepts? Could you also discuss effective strategies for overcoming challenges and share any valuable lessons learned for the industry?</p>
Challenges Faced (Maximum 10 minutes)	<p>5. What challenges do you face in developing green tourism service concepts, considering regulatory frameworks, resource limitations, market demand, and stakeholder collaboration? How do these challenges impact your ability to innovate and implement sustainable practices?</p>
Future Needs and Opportunities (Maximum 10 minutes)	<p>6. What's your vision for green tourism development in Moldova/Georgia? From your experience, what essential knowledge and competencies do you believe will be crucial for ensuring sustainable development in the industry</p>
Closing (Maximum 10 minutes)	<p>7. Thank you for participating in this interview and sharing your valuable insights on green tourism service concept development. Before we conclude, please feel free to share any additional comments or suggestions you have on green tourism or related topics. Your input is highly valued. For further questions or follow-up, you can reach us at [provide contact information].</p>