

# Inclusive Tourism in Georgia: Advancing Accessibility as a Pillar of Sustainable Development

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## ABSTRACT:

Inclusive tourism is a form of tourism that provides an equal and accessible experience for everyone, regardless of their physical, mental, age, social or cultural differences. Its main goal is to develop tourism services and infrastructure in such a way that no person faces barriers when traveling. Inclusive tourism is not only a matter of social responsibility, but also a significant economic and cultural opportunity, it is about creating a travel environment where everyone feels valued and included. Georgia has unique natural and cultural resources, which create a promising environment for inclusive tourism. State and private sector initiatives, infrastructure improvements, and adaptation of tourist facilities contribute to expanding travel opportunities for people with disabilities and other groups. However, despite its potential, inclusive tourism faces many challenges: infrastructural limitations, lack of information, problems with the qualification of service personnel, and a low level of awareness in society.

This study reviews the current state, opportunities and obstacles to the development of inclusive tourism. It highlights the importance of public and private sector engagement, infrastructure improvements, legislative regulations and raising public awareness.

The results of the study show that the development of inclusive tourism in Georgia requires strengthening legislative and strategic directions, adapting hotels and tourist facilities, improving transport accessibility and effective use of digital technologies.

Finally, recommendations are presented for the sustainable development of inclusive tourism, which will contribute to positioning Georgia as an attractive and inclusive tourist destination.

*Keywords: Inclusive tourism, Barrier-Free Travel, Disability-Friendly Tourism, Accessibility.*

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is a global economic and socio-cultural phenomenon of the modern world. Tourism meets human needs for cultural, physical, cognitive and spiritual development. Its main tasks are determined by specific social and cultural functions. Social tourism is subsidized from the resources allocated to meet social needs, which are necessary to create travel opportunities for students, youth, pensioners and veterans. For this category of

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people, as the least privileged part of the population, state and non-state organizations, charitable foundations create appropriate opportunities (UNWTO 2019, p.5).

Inclusive tourism is vital for fostering an equitable and accessible society. The tourism industry, one of the largest global economic sectors, has the potential to provide significant opportunities for people with disabilities and other groups facing social exclusion. The global trend is increasingly focused on making tourism accessible for everyone, and this trend is influencing policies and tourism practices in many countries, including Georgia.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

According to a number of studies, inclusive tourism is based on three main principles: accessibility, equity, and social integration (Richards & Wilson, 2004). These principles help create a tourism environment where all people, regardless of their circumstances, can enjoy equal opportunities. Internationally, numerous studies (Baum, 2008; Darcy, 2010) have clearly shown that infrastructure adaptation is one of the important prerequisites for the development of inclusive tourism. Simply put, if a tourist destination, hotel or other tourist infrastructure is not adapted for people with disabilities (for example, they cannot access it with a wheelchair), they are practically excluded from visiting these places. This problem is addressed by a barrier-reduction approach, which includes architectural changes to buildings, transport adaptation and the use of technology. Inclusive tourism is important not only in terms of social equity, but also in terms of economic benefits. Government and private sector research (Buhalis & Law, 2008) shows that inclusive tourism benefits economic growth because it reaches new markets and helps the tourism industry overcome market constraints. For individuals and groups who were previously unable to travel, inclusive services provide new economic opportunities and have a positive impact on the regional economy.

In Georgia, inclusive tourism is seen as a way to enhance the country's international reputation, attract more tourists, and contribute to the local economy. It also aligns with broader goals of social inclusion, equality, and human rights. Through targeted initiatives and legislative reforms, country has made significant steps in recent years to align its tourism industry with inclusive norms. The 2020 Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which created a framework for the legislation mandating accessibility in public spaces, including tourist destinations, was a major step. Building on this, specific components to enhance inclusion in the expansion of tourism are included in the new Tourism Law, which was adopted in December 2023. These include requiring newly registered establishments to have accessible infrastructure and imposing mandatory training standards on tourism workers. These legislative changes are supplemented by operational tools for enforcement, such as inspections and reporting requirements related to licensing and renewal procedures. On the basis of the abovementioned information, the Georgian National Tourism Administration (GNTA) has developed additional training courses for the specialists of the industry directed towards the application of inclusive tourism policies as well as observing international and national accessibility requirements. Moreover, the GNTA has implemented the use of digital tools for the collection and analysis of visitor feedback, thus enabling the prompt identification of accessibility challenges and the development of appropriate solutions to improve the comprehensive

travel experience. These actions respond to the needs of persons with disabilities, and demonstrates Georgia's efforts to go beyond the adoption of policies on inclusive tourism, ensuring that there is effective implementation and enforcement of such policies

The potential for inclusive tourism development in Georgia will bring significant benefits to the tourism sector. Although several infrastructure projects have been implemented in the country in recent years that take into account the needs of people with disabilities, the full adaptation of tourist facilities, transport accessibility, and consumer education remain a problem.

Studies, reports, and statistics conducted on the topic of inclusive tourism in Georgia reflect both the potential opportunities for the development of the field, as well as the existing challenges that must be overcome for the effective promotion of inclusive tourism.

### 3. Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach, having conducted semi-structured interviews with twelve representatives from the tourism business in Ajara. Each participant was purposefully chosen to fulfil a distinct professional role, which included tour operators, hotel managers, representatives of tourism education, and government officials. Interviews focused on: their current level of practices and awareness of inclusive tourism, perceived barriers and challenges, as well as strategies and recommendations for further development. As a result of studying the data, the presented opinions are substantiated and specific directions for solving the problem are proposed.

### 4. Results and Discussion

As we have mentioned, tourism is one of the most important economic sectors for Georgia, along with other sectors. The main enabling opportunities for this are manifested in its diverse tourism-resource potential. It has unique natural and climatic conditions, distinctive flora and fauna, numerous protected natural areas; the Black Sea as a recreational resource; resort destinations and resources for medical tourism with balneological or climatic directions; cultural, historical, traditional values, and so on. Accordingly, tourism has been a leader in terms of sectoral priorities and results of the Georgian economy in terms of revenue growth over the past 2 decades (Figure 1):

From 2010 to 2019, foreign travel revenue increased steadily from \$659 million to \$3,269 million, indicating a booming tourist industry. However, the COVID-19 epidemic and international travel restrictions caused income to fall to \$542 million in 2020. Since pandemic, by 2022, income had risen to \$3,517 million and hitting a record high of \$4,425 million in 2024.

The share of revenue from tourism in GDP compared to other sectors has been increasing from year to year (Kalandarishvili, M., et al. 2025) and reached 9% in 2024, which is a very growing indicator compared to previous active years, as the indicator even exceeded the growing indicator of 2019. Thus, the share of tourism in Georgia's GDP is developing dynamically. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the sector is in a continuous process of development. It is also worth noting that there are many opportunities to create more

tourism products with innovative approaches. With appropriate policies and investments, Georgia can further increase the share of tourism, which will contribute to the sustainable development of the economy.

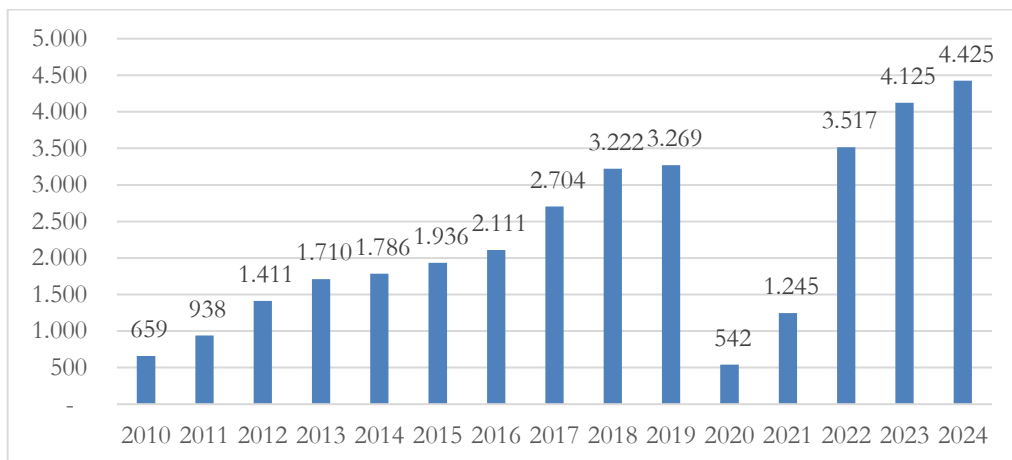


Figure 1: Income from Foreign Travel, Million USD

Source: National Bank of Georgia, (2024).

[https://nbg.gov.ge/statistics/statisticsdata?fbclid=IwY2xjawl5cABleHRuA2FlbQI5xMA4ABHaErY0TzUGkdj9OmEVzDXjiHnEeaN0zRbdLmVXf2xrv9-0OgNyW2HkczpQ\\_aem\\_mcTxKqJAqtGgtZ2xRFMVw](https://nbg.gov.ge/statistics/statisticsdata?fbclid=IwY2xjawl5cABleHRuA2FlbQI5xMA4ABHaErY0TzUGkdj9OmEVzDXjiHnEeaN0zRbdLmVXf2xrv9-0OgNyW2HkczpQ_aem_mcTxKqJAqtGgtZ2xRFMVw)

Accessed 20/01/2014.

While there is a lack of detailed national statistics regarding the economic effects of inclusive tourism for Georgia, global studies emphasize its financial opportunities. For instance, in the U.S. alone, disabled travellers contribute nearly \$50 billion in tourism-related expenditures, capturing the attention of marketers who have traditionally ignored this powerful segment of consumers (Open Doors Organization, 2024). Globally, about 1.3 billion (roughly 16% of the world's population) people have some kind of disability, and the tourism market for those who can be classified as 'disabled' along with family members and caregivers becomes over 2 billion people (UNWTO, 2023). The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) highlighted the fact that disabled tourists usually come with 1.9 companions which means inclusive tourism brings in almost triple the number of consumers per advertised traveller (WTTC, 2021). There is also evidence that over 70% of people with disabilities would travel more if access barriers were lifted, indicating that some markets can be greatly untapped (Amadeus, 2020). Strategic investments in barrier-free infrastructure expand market reach while reinforcing long-term tourism resilience. By embracing inclusive tourism, Georgia not only aligns with global accessibility standards but also unlocks new economic opportunities. Positioning inclusive tourism as a driver of financial growth—not merely a social obligation—can foster wider institutional support and ensure that the benefits of tourism are more equitably shared across society.

The above assessment and the principles of sustainable development are priorities for Georgia, in which, in our opinion, inclusive tourism should also occupy a priority place in terms of its development opportunities and acceptance of new challenges.

Inclusive tourism is an important type of tourism, with its own important segment of consumers. These are people with disabilities in various respects, who must have the full opportunity to receive the same full-fledged services in terms of accessibility as other visitors and tourists in the modern era of tourism development.

According to the United Nations “2018 Disability and Development Report: Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals” by, for, and with persons with disabilities, inclusive development for people with disabilities is both a practical requirement and a moral imperative. It makes the case that the 2030 Agenda's success depends on a strategy that guarantees everyone's participation, with a special emphasis on those with disabilities. The United Nations World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria, which set sustainability requirements for the travel industry, both embody this idea. The “article 7” of code specifically advocates for:

“The prospect of direct and personal access to the discovery and enjoyment of the planet's resources constitutes a right equally open to all the world's inhabitants; Family, youth, student and senior tourism and tourism for people with disabilities, should be encouraged and facilitated” (UN Tourism. (2020).

Inclusive development in general is a term that has not yet been established in some countries of the modern world. Unfortunately, many countries are now adapting, like Georgia, although there are developed countries that are almost fully adapted and follow ISO standards. The reality is that there are about 1 billion people in the world who suffer from some form of limited abilities.

It is important for them to create appropriate environmental conditions so that they can feel like full members of society. As we know, the International Organization for Standardization has been working on inclusive tourism issues for years, having developed a number of international standards, one of which is ISO-21902 (International Organization for Standardization. 2021). With advice for tour operators, travel agencies, and travel agents, ISO-21902 offers thorough instructions for ensuring that tourism is accessible to everyone. In order to save investment costs throughout the entire life cycle, it places a strong emphasis on integrating accessibility and Universal Design principles from the beginning. The goal of the standard is to assist travel agencies in developing inclusive settings and services that cater to the requirements of tourists with disabilities. By implementing these guidelines, businesses can enhance their sustainability, attract a broader range of customers, and promote equality, while improving service quality and creating new market opportunities. The ISO 21902 covers the following key areas:

- Researching and analysing accessibility levels in tourism products.
- Training staff and raising awareness about accessibility needs.
- Developing products that cater to travellers with diverse needs.
- Creating accessible marketing materials and promoting accessible destinations.
- Ensuring pre-trip, during-trip, and post-trip support for travellers with disabilities.

In the United States alone, there are an estimated 50 million people with disabilities – twice the total population of Australia. People with disabilities represent the largest and fastest growing market segment. This category of consumers is not distinguished by financial strength, but they have the resources to travel several times a year, especially for leisure,

visiting family and receiving medical care. People with disabilities have been divided according to their illnesses or their level of independence. They are characterized by the modern classification of disabilities - severe, moderate and mild. According to this group, the more severe the mobility problem, the more special attention they need.

People with disabilities are looking for quiet destinations where they will have independence and easy access to services. Tourism service providers should be aware that moderate and severe categories of disabled people use two types of transport: car/van and air transport. This category of customers is loyal to hotels, motels, and resorts that are sensitive to their needs.

Inclusive tourism is becoming increasingly popular in the world. International organizations, such as the United Nations and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), are focusing on the inclusivity and accessibility of tourism. Georgia, as a tourist country, must comply with this trend in order to increase competitiveness in the tourism sector. Georgia is distinguished by its diverse tourist resources – unique nature, cultural heritage, historical monuments, wine tourism and recreation areas. With the development of inclusive tourism, these places will become more accessible to persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, which will contribute to the growth of tourist flows.

Inclusive tourism creates additional economic opportunities – the creation of adapted services for hotels and tourism companies will open new markets. Persons with disabilities and their families make up a significant share of the tourism market and they can be attracted by the development of appropriate services.

If in the past people made a choice in a particular tourist destination because of the high price. Today, there is a high interest and popularity in those tourist places where there are diversified, high-standard services and products, including accessibility to all services for people of all abilities, which plays a major role in the decision-making process.

According to our observations and in general, it is revealed that the higher the possibility of people's integration according to socio-economic capabilities, the higher the public awareness and, accordingly, the resource for sustainable development of various fields. It is precisely this type of development pace that modern rapidly developing tourist cities or countries should take into account, and the main task is to create such a diverse, socially integrated tourist infrastructure, a tourist product.

Many countries are successfully implementing inclusive tourism strategies, ensuring that all tourists, including people with disabilities, the elderly, families with children, and visitors with other special needs, can fully enjoy tourism services.

#### 1. Barcelona, Spain – Accessible Urban Tourism

**Inclusive Infrastructure** – Barcelona is one of the most accessible cities in Europe. The public transport system (metro, buses) is adapted for wheelchair users (Accessible Barcelona, 2025).

**Accessibility of tourist attractions** – Famous places such as Sagrada Familia, Park Guell, Casa Batlló, etc., are equipped with ramps, elevators, and audio guides for the blind.

**Inclusive Beaches** – Special ramps, lifts and volunteers help people with disabilities enter the water on Barcelona's beaches.

#### 2. Sydney, Australia – Technological Inclusion (Digital inclusion, 2024).

Technological Assistance – Sydney’s tourism agencies use smart apps that help tourists with voice instructions, sign language translation and other services.

Sydney Opera House – Provides tours with subtitles and sign language translation for the hearing impaired.

Zoo and Botanical Gardens – Visitors are provided with Braille signage, wheelchair-accessible paths and tactile exhibits for the blind.

3. Stockholm, Sweden – Inclusive Transport and Culture (Accessible travel, 2025).

100% Adapted Public Transport – The city’s buses, metro and tram systems are fully adapted for wheelchair users and people with other special needs.

Museum Accessibility – Most of the city’s museum and cultural centre buildings are adapted for visitors with disabilities. For example, the Vasa Museum offers tactile exhibits for blind tourists.

Accessible Hotels – Most of the city’s hotels provide adapted rooms and services for people with disabilities.

4. Dubai, United Arab Emirates – New Standards for Inclusive Tourism (Del Rosario, 2024).

Accessible Airport – Dubai International Airport is equipped with modern sensory systems, sign language interpreters and special services for people with wheelchairs.

Inclusive attractions – The Burj Khalifa and Dubai Mall have elevators, ramps, and Braille signage.

Inclusive desert tours – Special 4x4 vehicles and hoist systems allow wheelchair users to participate in desert tours.

5. Kyoto, Japan – Accessibility of cultural and natural heritage (Accessible-Japan, 2023).

Adaptation of traditional temples – While most Japanese temples are distinguished by their ancient architecture, many temples in Kyoto are equipped with elevators, ramps, and sign language guides.

Public transportation – Taxis, buses, and trains are equipped with wheelchair-accessible seats.

Travel apps – Apps are available that take into account the needs of blind and hearing-impaired tourists.

In recent years, Georgia has taken steps towards inclusive tourism. For example:

Adapted transport and tourist attractions are emerging in Tbilisi and several regions.

Hotels and tourist facilities are slowly trying to meet international standards.

The Georgian National Tourism Administration shall gradually adapt its created and/or designed infrastructure and services to universal design by December 31, 2035, in order to ensure full accessibility for persons with disabilities (Report of the Public Defender of Georgia. 2019).

The government adopted the “Government Action Plan for Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities for 2018-2020”, which envisages the implementation of various measures: including ensuring equal participation of persons with disabilities in sports, cultural, recreational and entertainment events (idea design group, 2018).

Within the framework of the Accessible Tourism Program, there are specific services in Georgia, namely beach infrastructure and swimming wheelchairs for people with disabilities on the Batumi Boulevard coast, which have enabled people with disabilities, in

many cases, for the first time to enter the sea and relax on the beach next to others. This project is funded with the support of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara and its goal is to create an accessible resource for people with disabilities and also to facilitate their rapid integration into society.

## 5. Discussion

Several key challenges currently hindering the advancement of inclusive tourism in the country are:

- Lack of infrastructure

Despite the fact that the infrastructure in Tbilisi and other large cities is slowly improving, most tourist facilities are still not adapted for people with disabilities.

There are no ramps, elevators or adapted bathrooms at tourist sites.

Transportation in the regions is problematic for people with disabilities, as much of the public transport cannot meet their needs.

- Lack of awareness

The importance of inclusive tourism is still poorly understood in society.

Many people working in the tourism sector do not have the appropriate knowledge on how to serve people with disabilities.

Some tourist facilities do not have proper signs or instructions, which makes it difficult for people with disabilities to move around independently.

- Lack of proper regulations and enforcement

Georgian legislation contains certain requirements on creating an adapted environment for people with disabilities, but their implementation is still weak.

There are no clear regulations that would oblige hotels and tourism companies to provide inclusive services. Supervision mechanisms are weak, which is why many facilities do not comply with inclusive tourism standards.

- Adaptation of cultural heritage sites

Many tourist facilities in Georgia are of historical importance, which makes it difficult to physically adapt them without violating cultural heritage. Innovative approaches and investments are needed to address this issue.

Although Georgia is progressing toward the development of inclusive tourism, there remains a significant gap in research on the topic. To address this, a qualitative study was conducted using semi-structured interviews with twelve tourism professionals in Ajara, purposefully selected to represent diverse sectors, including tour operators, hotel managers, educators, and government officials. The interviews investigated their current practices and awareness of inclusive tourism, identified key challenges, and collected their recommendations for future development. Preliminary findings highlight a complex and multifaceted landscape of inclusive tourism in Ajara. While most respondents demonstrated a similar level of awareness regarding the concepts of inclusive tourism, they also identified common challenges faced by the region in implementing these practices effectively. The most commonly stated factors were:

- A Lack of Accessible Infrastructure: Accessible features, which allow individuals with disabilities to navigate freely, are a vital outside major urban centres;



- **Lack of trained Staff:** A variety of service providers generally lack the appropriate training catered to accommodating a wide range of needs.
- **Lack of Financial Motivation:** It is not economical for most businesses to modify their services to be more inclusive.

The reception of the new tourism law has been viewed as a positive development. Though, a number of interviewees voiced concerns about the practical enforcement and monitoring systems designed to ensure compliance. As one hotel manager from Batumi put it, "The law is promising, but we don't yet know how will it be translated into real changes on the ground." Another respondent representing tour operator also noted the development imbalance: "Although things are gradually improving, progress remains slow even in major cities, and the situation is even more challenging in mountain villages, where basic infrastructure still fails to meet the needs of people with disabilities."

Stakeholders highlighted the lack of advanced trainings as a gap requiring urgent attention. One tour operator's representative stated, "There has been started some trainings on accessible tourism from government, but it's still very early. Businesses need more support to make meaningful changes." An education representative voiced the same opinion when he said, "There's goodwill, but there's a lack of practical knowledge as well. Sometimes, tourism business providers just don't know what accessibility really means."

These findings suggest progress alongside persistent challenges of achieving inclusive tourism in Ajara. Stakeholders acknowledge the need for inclusivity, especially as the region enhances its international branding. However, inclusivity is far too often regarded as an afterthought. This study highlights the urgent need for integrated planning that incorporates accessibility from the outset, capacity-building initiatives for service providers, and strengthened public-private partnerships.

While the law provides a foundational framework, the operationalization of inclusivity necessitates sustained investment, clear guidelines, and continuous stakeholder engagement. The spectrum of perspectives—ranging from optimistic to skeptical—indicates that although policy reforms have established a groundwork for inclusive tourism, successful implementation will rely heavily on collaborative efforts across multiple levels.

## 6. Conclusions, recommendations

Inclusive tourism in Georgia is still in its infancy, but it has great potential to boost the country's economic growth and international tourist appeal. Despite the challenges, improving infrastructure, tightening regulations, and raising public awareness will help to fully develop inclusive tourism.

Promoting inclusive tourism is not only a social responsibility, but also an important factor in increasing the competitiveness of Georgia's tourism sector. It is crucial for translating broad concepts of inclusive tourism into actionable plans such as:

1. Identify and select pilot regions for testing inclusive tourism policies and practices. These regions should represent diverse geographical, social, and economic contexts to understand how different areas may require tailored approaches.

Action Steps:

- Define clear criteria for selecting pilot regions (e.g., urban vs. rural, tourist-heavy vs. underdeveloped regions).
  - Conduct baseline assessments of accessibility, tourism infrastructure, and demographic data (e.g., disability prevalence, senior populations, etc.) to tailor interventions.
  - Implement initial inclusive tourism initiatives in these regions, such as accessible transport, inclusive accommodations, and staff training.
2. Track the progress of accessibility improvements in tourism-related infrastructure and services.

#### Action Steps:

- Develop a set of measurable indicators to assess accessibility (e.g., wheelchair-accessible paths, availability of sign language interpreters, sensory-friendly environments).
- Use a longitudinal approach to measure improvements at regular intervals (e.g., yearly assessments) through surveys, audits, and field observations.
- Employ digital tools like geographic information systems (GIS) to monitor accessibility changes across different regions.

3. Evaluate how the quality of service in the tourism sector evolves as inclusivity measures are implemented.

#### Action Steps:

- Establish a service quality framework that includes inclusive criteria (e.g., customer satisfaction among tourists with disabilities, diversity training effectiveness for staff).
- Use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods (surveys, interviews, focus groups) to gather feedback from both tourists and service providers.
- Track changes in the public perception of inclusive services through ongoing customer satisfaction surveys and social media sentiment analysis.

4. Incorporate continuous feedback from affected stakeholders, particularly those from marginalized groups, to refine and enhance inclusive tourism practices.

#### Action Steps:

- Create advisory boards or focus groups consisting of people with disabilities, older adults, and other underrepresented groups to provide direct input.
- Use periodic community consultations and surveys to capture ongoing feedback from tourists and service providers.
- Develop a transparent system for collecting and acting on feedback, ensuring that iterative improvements are made.

5. Design a phased implementation strategy with realistic, measurable benchmarks to monitor progress over time.

#### Action Steps:

- Set short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals (e.g., within 1, 3, and 5 years) for each pilot region based on the initial assessments.
- Design action plans for each phase, clearly defining what success looks like at each stage (e.g., improved ratings in accessibility audits, higher levels of customer satisfaction, or a growing percentage of accessible tourism offerings).
- Develop contingency plans for regions that face implementation challenges, and use pilot data to adjust future policies and resource allocations accordingly.

6. Ensure that the findings from pilot regions can be integrated into national policy and scaled to other regions.

### Action Steps:

- Gather data from pilot regions to inform a national strategy for inclusive tourism, emphasizing scalability, adaptability, and regional customization.
- Develop frameworks for transferring successful policies and practices from pilot regions to other areas.
- Consider cross-sector partnerships (e.g., local governments, private companies, NGOs) to help sustain and expand successful initiatives.

This phased approach would allow for realistic benchmarks and ensure the feedback from those most affected is continuously integrated into the strategy, leading to an effective, long-term national plan for inclusive tourism.

In the recommendations, we have broken down four main areas of action:

1. Improving laws and regulations
2. Infrastructure investments
3. Awareness raising and education
4. Encouraging private sector involvement

In conclusion, we can formulate the following opinions:

- Inclusive tourism should be recognized as a priority in the future within the framework of sustainable tourism development in the country;
- A unified state policy should be developed in the form of a strategy for the development of inclusive tourism framework program, which will involve all stakeholders: the state; local society; private business; tourism product manufacturers; all segments of people with various types of disabilities, in order to adapt and adjust all issues to them directly.
- The inclusive tourism direction and its entire segment should be recognized as a source of economic income growth, like other tourist destinations.
- Training and retraining of human resources in the service sector in all necessary sectors, taking into account international tourism standards, in the essence of inclusive tourism, awareness-raising, education and professional growth.

The need to regulate all of the above needs to be taken globally at the level of developing state policy and sustainable tourism development strategies. At the next stage, it is necessary to develop properly organized preliminary preparatory work at the local level, already in individual tourist destinations, including:

- Step-by-step study and adaptation of specific tourist destinations and then their use for accessible tourism for people with disabilities;
- In the tourism industry, in service services, whether it be catering or accommodation, travel agencies or other service providers, proper training of human resources: knowledge and mastery of sign language or various skills and creation of appropriate services or tours.
- Adapting tourist destinations to create inclusive, appropriate infrastructure and spaces that will help eliminate barriers that hinder physical access.
- Creating accessible hiking trails and camping sites;
- It would be good to create inclusive adventure tours, we have many tourist destinations and resources for this. Especially when, based on incomplete registration, the number of this segment in our country exceeds approximately 1,300,000. It includes people with visual impairments or severe impairments, people with hearing impairments, people with mobility and posture disorders, etc. In this data, people with significant and fully expressed limitations make up approximately 9%, the rest are people with partial limitations and

abilities. In both cases, in general, within the country itself, we have a fairly large segment of the population who need to have services or tours tailored to their abilities. In our opinion, this is a segment that is looking for and needs appropriate physical and emotional adapted tourist environment conditions. Inclusive adventure tourism in Georgia's mountainous terrain holds significant potential, though it presents unique challenges in terms of accessibility, conservation, and safety.

1. Feasibility of Adaptive Hiking Trails: The rugged terrain of Georgia's mountains presents challenges for adaptive hiking, but innovations like off-road wheelchairs or Joëlette trekking chairs can help. Low-impact trail modifications can also be considered, provided they don't harm the environment.

2. Balancing Conservation and Accessibility: Zoning can help ensure some trails remain accessible while minimizing environmental impact. Collaboration with conservation organizations will be key to implementing temporary, low-impact adaptations without damaging ecosystems.

3. Ensuring Safety: Specialized guides and clear safety protocols, such as accessible trail markers and emergency response systems, will be necessary to ensure safety for all participants, especially in high-altitude, rugged areas.

4. Innovation and Regional Competitiveness: By embracing adaptive adventure tourism, Georgia could differentiate itself as a leader in inclusive tourism in the Caucasus. This approach can attract international tourists and partnerships with organizations focused on inclusive travel.

Developing adaptive hiking trails in Georgia's mountains is feasible with careful planning. It offers the potential for regional competitiveness and innovative tourism, positioning Georgia as a leader in this emerging niche. A pilot project in a popular national park could be an excellent starting point.

- It would be good to develop accessible cultural tours. Here, digital accessibility for museums and cultural monuments should be taken into account. However, we would like to note that in terms of digital accessibility, several museums in Georgia, in particular in Adjara, are already equipped with digital services, although there is a problem of lack of information and inaccessibility for this segment.

- It is necessary for business representatives operating in the market in separate sectors of all tourist destinations to have social responsibility. This should include the following: an obligation to have an adapted technical, physical and professional environment created for users with disabilities in their service, such as ramps, adapted toilets, etc.

The above-listed necessary problems are issues, the gradual regulation of which will create a real opportunity for the development of inclusive tourism in our country, which will significantly increase the socio-economic effect of tourism.

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