

**Master project: Examining main challenges for sustainable tourism
management on mountain resorts of Georgia**

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*A master project submitted to the Faculty of Ilia State University Business, Technology
and Education Business School in fulfilment of the requirements for the academic degree
of Master of Business Administration*

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Tbilisi 2021

Declaration

As the author of this paper, I declare that this thesis presented for the degree of Master of Business Administration is an original report of my research and has been written by me. References have been provided on all supporting literature and resources. I confirm that this thesis has been composed entirely by myself, that the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Some of the work described in this thesis was previously written and submitted as a simulated paper in the course “Academic Writing for MBA” at Ilia State University Business School in autumn 2020.

Ketevan Beglarishvili, 18/06/2021

Abstract

Tourism industry has been growing rapidly for the last century. Along with the growth of the industry, the number of tourists in mountain areas expanded as well. These mountain areas, as tourism destinations, come second in popularity after islands and coasts. Some countries excelled in minimizing the negative impact of tourism on their environment and maximizing the economic growth and development of local communities. However, in Georgia, which is a developing country, the importance of sustainability is still vague. This paper forms an extensive analysis of sustainability of management on Georgian mountain resorts. The research is interdisciplinary in nature, as it integrates knowledge from sustainability and management science. Using qualitative methods of research, the paper presents interviews with tourism experts. Based on the data collected, it analyzes where those resorts stand when it comes to sustainable tourism management. Main challenges on mountain resorts that appeared in the collected data are inappropriate infrastructure, lack of conceptual development of the resorts, lack of cooperation and communication, environmental issues, lack of locals' engagement in decision-making and lack of qualification of local human resources. Recommendations are given for destination managers to work towards bringing private investors; create regulations, standards and guidelines for businesses and tourists; create systematic training for local people; develop one strategic plan for all agencies to follow. For future research, it is advised to analyze separate agencies and organizations working for mountain tourism development in Georgia and come up with a plan for all to communicate better and plan systematic, united development and management for the one grand vision.

Keywords: Sustainability, tourism, sustainable management, mountain destination, ski resort, main challenges.