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A Comparative Research and Analysis of the Development of Sustainable Tourism in Georgian and other International Curricula

Tamar Koblianidze, PhD

Associate Professor, Georgian Technical University

Invited Professor, Grigol Robakidze University, Georgia

Nino Sachaleli, PhD Candidate

Lecturer, Assistant, Grigol Robakidze University, Georgia

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Abstract

In recent years, sustainable development has become an important part of educational systems, beginning from primary schools to universities. Consequently, it has evolved into a societal priority. In 2019, the UNESCO adopted the ESD for 2030 framework with the overall objective of building a more just and sustainable world through the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Education for sustainable development for 2030 framework identifies 5 priority action areas: policy, education and training settings, educators, youth, and communities. Sustainable tourism development has been a commonly used term for many years and is, therefore, an important concept for consideration within tourism degree courses/programs. Based on qualitative research and case study method, this paper focuses on discussing the undergraduate and graduate programs in the context of teaching sustainable tourism in foreign countries, which are compared with the experience of the Georgian Technical University. The aim of the research was to study current educational programs related to sustainable tourism and highlight its importance. In conclusion, it can be asserted that sustainable tourism programs are experiencing a growing demand, with various types of

policies being developed. However, the program at the Georgian Technical University stands out on an international scale, having no analogue and being truly unique. At the same time, the results indicate that in many cases, sustainability pedagogy/teaching methods, such as systems and holistic thinking, are not yet widely adopted and are in the process of implementation.

Keywords: Sustainability, Education, Sustainable tourism, Mountain, Tourism curricula

Introduction

Sustainability poses a new challenge for the entire world, emerging prominently in the 20th and 21st centuries, which is evidenced by several international agreements. Tourism is one of the main economic sectors in the world, contributing significantly to the generation of crucial social benefits.

Tourism has been recognized for its potential to contribute to the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in the areas of job creation, sustainable consumption and production, and the conservation of natural resources. The tourism sector is specifically mentioned and tasked with fulfilling three of the SDGs (Romeo et al., 2021).

1. SDG 8 focuses on the promotion of “sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all”.
2. SDG 12 aims to “ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns”, and to “develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism, which creates jobs, promotes local culture, and products”.
3. SDG 14 sets out to “conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development”.

Accelerating climate action (SDG 13) in tourism is of utmost importance for the resilience of the tourism sector, which is highly vulnerable to climate change, while simultaneously contributing to greenhouse gas emissions.

Cross-cutting Nature of Tourism and its Role in the Achievement of the SDGs in Mountain Regions (Romeo et al., 2021)

- SDG 11 – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. Tourism can contribute to the economic resilience of mountain communities, who depend on agriculture. Tourism can also contribute to the inclusiveness and sustainability of mountain settlements by supporting the conservation of natural resources and providing jobs for youth and women.

- SDG 15 – Life on Land.
- Since natural ecosystems and biodiversity, including mountains, rivers, and lakes, are prime tourism assets, the sector offers considerable opportunities for their conservation if managed in a sustainable manner. Destinations are increasingly aware of the mutually beneficial relationship between the conservation of natural ecosystems and tourism revenues.
- SDG 17 – Revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

Developing sustainable tourism in mountains requires reducing its negative environmental and social impacts and addressing the challenges posed by climate change.

Materials and Methods

The research was conducted using qualitative research method. The article analyses materials provided by research paper, articles and literature reviews, and websites. The study was carried out from 1st of July, 2023 to 1st of August, 2023 and reviewed all educational programs related to tourism sustainable development (searched on google). This paper is based on content analysis. Only content published through the official websites of selected universities has been included. The article includes curricula of universities in Georgia and other foreign countries. According to case study method, the article examines and analyses the experiences of the following universities: University of Florence Italy, Florence - School of Economics and Management; University of Groningen, Leeuwarden, Netherlands; Linnaeus University Kalmar, Sweden; University of Cagliari, Italy; ESDES Lyon Business School, France; Harokopio University of Athens, the Institute of Research, Higher Studies in Tourism (IREST) of the University of Paris I - Panthéon Sorbonne, the Department of Business Administration of the University of the Aegean; Arden Study Centre, ARDEN University, Berlin, Germany; Yerevan State University, Yerevan, Armenia; ISPGAY vila Nova de Gaia, Portugal; Florida International University Chaplin School of Hospitality & Tourism Management, USA.

Main Text

Sustainability is an ongoing theme in the tourism literature and is a growing concern in the wider area of business studies. Consequently, there is a growing recognition of the need for sustainability education in programs for business and tourism students. The development of such programs should be based on a sound understanding of the existing values and attitudes of current students. This article reports a study that explored the environmental attitudes

of a sample of Generation Y students in a business and tourism program using the New Environmental Paradigm Scale (Benckendorff et al., 2013).

In September 2015, world leaders unanimously adopted a new framework document, marking a global commitment to collective action. The 17 Sustainable development goals obligate states to ensure the achievement of 169 goals by 2030. These goals aim to eradicate poverty, defend the environment of the earth and climate, and promote peace and well-being to the whole inhabitants (United Nations Georgia n.d.).

The fourth goal of sustainable development is aimed at achieving inclusive and equal education, providing lifelong learning opportunity to all. For example, this goal focuses on achieving the following by 2030:

- Providing affordable and high-quality technical, professional and secondary, and higher education.
- To increase the number of youngsters and adults, who have appropriate skills to be employed in decent work and entrepreneurship.
- To ensure that all pupils acquire knowledge and skills (including sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles) to promote sustainable development.

Due to the necessity to provide education on sustainable development, in 2019, UNESCO adopted the Education for Sustainable Development framework for 2030. This framework identifies priority action areas and includes education and training settings, educators, and youth (alongside policy and communities (Education for Sustainable Development. UNESCO. n.d.)

In recent years, numerous studies have been conducted on issues related to sustainable development education. However, this research emphasizes two significant directions: Mountain Sustainable development (Ueno et al., 2020) and Tourism Sustainable Development (Boluk et al., 2021) (Balsiger & Price, 2020).

In addition to these considerations, the experience around the world is also studied. Millar and Park, (2013) in their article "Sustainability in hospitality education: the industry's perspective and implications for curriculum," highlight that the hospitality curriculum should be updated and more progressive. This will help students harness conceptual and practical competencies about sustainability. According to Chawla (2015), who studied Sustainability in Hospitality Education: A Content Analysis of the Curriculum of British Universities, sustainability is now a key part of the hospitality/tourism management curriculum, rather than merely an interesting alternative.

One of the challenges in developing a curriculum for sustainable tourism development is gaining firsthand experience of the actual conditions

of tourism development. The goal is to educate students to identify and understand the existing problems in sustainable tourism development. Therefore, one learning method developed to meet the need for experiencing real conditions is field studies or field trips. These activities have been organised in the form of tourism known as educational tourism (edu-tourism) or tourism activities proposed to enhance knowledge and understanding for scholars (Malihah & Setiyorini, 2014). Researchers from Japan, Switzerland, and United Kingdom (Ueno at al., 2020) identified the 28 program opportunities of mountain studies as education for SMD (Education Sustainable Mountain Development - ESMD):

- Programs were primarily implemented by universities, research institutes, or NPOs, individually or in collaboration.
- The type of teaching and learning (TL) settings included regular oral lectures, online courses, and intensive lectures, often combined with fieldwork.
- Researchers have classified the 28 cases of programs into 6 types: Degree programs and specializations within a degree program, delivered by an individual university/college; Regular intensive courses, including a field component, such as summer or winter school; Single center organizing multiple relevant degrees and training courses or three-degree program delivered by a group of universities; Online education programs or degree programs; Schools for environment conservation or outdoor education organized by an NPO; Research facilities (institutes) or observatories.

It is important to mention the significant role of the journal “Mountain Research and Development,, which is the leading international scientific journal specifically devoted to sustainable development in the world’s mountains. The journal is published by the International Mountain Society (IMS).

The research about sustainable tourism educational programs in the field of tourism in the system was not found. However, it is crucial to highlight UNWTO's special activity in the field of education. Under its umbrella, the platform “Tourism for SDGs”, was created, providing brief information about the research – “Tourism and Sustainable Development Goals: The Role Of Latin American Universities: Results, Progress, And New Challenges” (2023).

Based on the results obtained from the application of a survey applied to university tourism degree courses, both at undergraduate and postgraduate level in Argentina and Brazil, it was found that, although the topic of sustainability is included in every tourism courses, there is still no evidence of concrete application of the 2030 Agenda, implemented by the SDGs, including its 17 goals and 169 targets. Hence, research on the teaching of sustainable

development of tourism is quite relevant. It is crucial to note that tourism serves as a significant resource for numerous mountain economies, a reality particularly applicable to Georgia, where a substantial portion of the territory is mountainous."

Research Findings

The results of the research are demonstrated in Table 1. Table 2 illustrates the international experience of bachelors' programs in the field of sustainable tourism. Table 1 indicates that various countries offer master's programs in the field of sustainable tourism, with varying durations. Some programs last for 12 months, while others extend for a duration of 2 years. The program provided in Italy is interesting and gives opportunity to study management of natural, cultural, and historical resources. The program offered by the University of Groningen stands out for its interesting characteristics. Additionally, challenging programs are available in Sweden, Greece, and France. Overall, all master's programs highlight that sustainable tourism is a multidisciplinary field that integrates various aspects within the framework of sustainable development.

Table 1. International Experience of Master's Programs in the Field of Sustainable Tourism

#	Title of program and Study language	University / country	Duration and ECT credits	Description of program
1	The Master's Program: Design of Sustainable Tourism Systems in English (University of Florence. Italy, Florence. School of Economics and Management, n.d).	University of Florence Italy, Florence School of Economics and Management	2 years = 120 credits	<p>Program is characterized by an interdisciplinary program. The graduates will acquire the basic competence in the fields of human and social sciences, a good command of information technology and statistical techniques, indispensable for a real-world interpretation of tourism trends and taste changes of the tourist population. The Master's Program also provides legislative, historical, and geographical knowledge useful for enhancing the values of the resources and the cultural heritage of a territory.</p> <p>The Master's Program deals with topics related with the sustainable management of natural, cultural, and historical resources. The remarkable growth of tourism requires considerable planning activities by both the public and private sectors in order to maximise economic returns while containing the potential negative impacts on the environment.</p>

2	MSc in Climate Adaptation Governance in English (MSc in Climate Adaptation Governance, n.d.)	University of Groningen, Leeuwarden, Netherlands	1 year=60 credits	Within this program, one can choose to pursue a track in sustainable tourism or specialize in the governance of climate adaptation. Both paths lead to a Master of Science degree. During the program, participants will engage in courses covering Place, Regions, & Identities; Fieldwork Cultural Geography; Adaptation Governance; Nature, Landscape & Heritage; Culture & Community-Based Adaptation; Qualitative Research Methods; Urban Adaptation & Innovation; and Social Impact Assessment.
3	MSc in Master of Science in Tourism and Sustainability in English (Master of Science in Tourism and Sustainability, n.d)	Linnaeus University Kalmar, Sweden	2 years = 120 credits	This Master's program provides in-depth knowledge about how to evaluate tourism and plan for future tourism from a sustainability perspective. The main field of study: Tourism Studies. As a globally leading business industry, the tourism industry has to take responsibility for the planet's limitations. The Tourism and Sustainability Master's program offers insight into the paramount challenges confronting the tourism industry's development and our world. Individuals will acquire skills to grapple with important and often contradictory trajectories of tourism and its sustainable future. This can be, for instance, how tourists often seek the pristine, the authentic, or the genuine, while also burdening destinations and travel systems through unsustainable patterns of practices and carbon dioxide emissions. On a larger scale, it is not only the tourism industry that is under threat but also the world as we know it. Therefore, the most central question in the Master's program in Tourism and Sustainability is: How do we create the tourism industry of the future?
4.	Master's Degree in Management and Monitoring of Sustainable Tourism in Italian (Master's Degree in Management and Monitoring of Sustainable Tourism, n.d)	University of Cagliari Cagliari, Italy	2 years = 120 credits	The Master's Degree Course in Management and Monitoring of Sustainable Tourism (MMTS) aims to train managers specializing in the monitoring, acquisition, processing, and interpretation of tourism data and processes with a view to sustainable development. Through a multidisciplinary training course in the economic, managerial, anthropological, environmental, IT-statistical, and legal fields, outgoing professionals will be able to carry out consultancy and support activities for decision-making processes, in the public and

				private sectors, and to assume managerial roles within companies.
5	MSc Sustainable Tourism and Event Management in English (MSc Sustainable Tourism and Event Management, n.d.)	ESDES Lyon Business School, France	13 months, number of credits unknown	<p>The MSc Sustainable Tourism and Event Management provides strategic visions of ESG-focused practices and enables students to generate sustainable solutions, whilst combatting the environmental and societal challenges faced by the tourism and events industries. Students will be thoroughly versed in socio-economic impacts, sustainability-based marketing, and management along with ideal practices for the planning of deliverables in these sectors.</p> <p>The 13month program will be based in Esdes Business School’s campus in Annecy and students will also benefit from 2 field trips to enhance their learning experience. At the end of the course, students will have acquired the necessary skills to determine the best impactful initiatives for working in the hospitality sector.</p>
6	International Master’s Program (MSc) in “Sustainable tourism Development: Heritage, Enviroment, Society” (Sustainable Tourism Development: Heritage, Environment, Society, n.d.)	Harokopio University of Athens, the Institute of Research, Higher Studies in Tourism (IREST) of the University of Paris I - Panthéon Sorbonne, , the Department of Business Administration of the University of the Aegean	12 months = 60 credits	<p>The diploma offered at Harokopio University of Athens and the one offered at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University are two separate and independent diplomas.</p> <p>The Programme focuses on the provision of high-level qualifications for professions related to Tourism Science and Heritage. The subject of the Master’s Programme focuses on providing specialized studies in the scientific field of Sustainable Tourism Development through heritage. Specifically, its goal is to provide specialized training for postgraduate students in subjects related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Development of Tourism • Tourism and Culture • Cultural Tourism • Heritage Management and Marketing • Development and Management of Tourist Destinations • Economy of Tourism • Environmental Protection of Tourist Areas <p>The Master’s Programme is a double degree Programme that results in the award of two diplomas to the student. According to the 15th Special Interinstitutional Committee of</p>

				22.03.2021 and the provisions of article 34 of the Law 4485/2017, the Master's Program is a full-time program made up of two (2) academic semesters (12 months).
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Note. Authors, according to the research

Table 2. International Experience of Bachelors' Programs in the Field of Sustainable Tourism

#	Title of Program and Study Language	University /country	Duration and ECT Credits	Description of Program	Note
1	BA (Hons) in Business Management (Tourism) in English BA (Hons) Business Management (Tourism) n.d.)	Arden Study Centre, ARDEN University, Berlin, Germany	Students have 3-9 years to complete this course. Most of the students, however, aim to complete the course within 3 to 6 years.	<p>Arden University offers the BA (Hons) in Business Management (Tourism) for individuals seeking to develop professional skills and insider knowledge within the tourism industry. The course provides the necessary foundation for managing or starting a business in the field, with a curriculum that enforces a range of transferable, relevant business skills. Students will develop business skills and understanding specific to tourism management, allowing them to respond to specific industry requirements in national and international contexts.</p> <p>The course will approach several aspects of the tourism industry and how to manage them in a business setting. This includes topics such as national and international travel, understanding the tourism environment, contemporary issues in tourism management, and sustainable tourism management.</p> <p>It will also tackle fundamental business elements, such as finance, marketing, business processes, and business analysis. Students can expect to acquire valuable skills such as personnel management, entrepreneurship, and the ability to analyse and interpret written, visual, and graphical data to improve business performance.</p>	Berlin or Online. Full support both online and on-site. The exact number of credits is unknown
2	Bachelor of Arts in Sustainable Tourism	Yerevan State University,	4 years	The program aims to prepare professionals/managers in the field of sustainable tourism management, who will be able to:	The exact number of credits is unknown

<p>Management in English (Bachelor of Arts in Sustainable Tourism Management. n.d)</p>	<p>Yerevan, Armenia</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Know the theoretical and methodological system of sustainable tourism; •Design principles and strategical programs for sustainable tourism development; •Organize tourism activities; •Apply theoretical knowledge, practical abilities, and skills in line with current trends and requirements of the tourism industry; •Manage tourism in all its dimensions based on the principles of sustainable tourism; •Think critically, creatively, and innovatively •Support global sustainability. <p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>The aim of the program is to ensure students have the following learning outcomes;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •To analyze and evaluate the place and role of tourism in the structure and development of the society; •To know the principles of a service organization in tourism activities; •To identify the structural peculiarities of tourism in the field of service from the point of view of sustainable tourism; •To design organizational programs for the tourism industry; •To carry out research in the field of tourism from the point of view of sustainability; •To evaluate the tourism industry, infrastructure, and resources; •To design and implement sustainable tourism programs; •To develop strategic directions for sustainable tourism development and improvement; •To manage sustainable tourism projects; •To have a systemized understanding of interdisciplinary patterns of sustainable tourism (economics, geography and environmental science, sociology, etc.) •To establish and manage a touristic business in accordance with the principles of sustainable tourism. 	
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3	Sustainable Tourism and Business in Portuguese (Sustainable Tourism and Business. n.d.)	ISPGAY vila Nova de Gaia, Portugal	6 semesters = 180 credits	<p>The Degree in Tourism and Sustainable Business at ISPGAYA provides practical and experimental training based on the theoretical knowledge necessary for professional practice.</p> <p>It promotes inter and multidisciplinary training in various domains through the transmission of solid technical knowledge about human intervention and tourist activity. The program values the understanding of the intercultural dimension and its interactions in the most diverse sectoral domains of the economy and society, with the capacity to promote the realization of sustainable tourism business. Future tourism professionals are expected to possess awareness and a critical attitude regarding the ethical, environmental, and legal guidelines that frame the best practices used for the implementation and sustainable management of tourism development projects. Companies in the sector face the challenge of adapting to new competitiveness factors due to globalization, the new world order, pandemic crises, energy crises, climate change, among others.</p>	
4.	Online Bachelor of Arts in Global Sustainable Tourism in English (Online Bachelor of Arts in Global Sustainable Tourism. n.d.)	Florida International University's Chaplin School of Hospitality & Tourism Management, USA	4 years;	<p>Worldwide, the impacts of tourism on the natural environment are under increasing scrutiny, with a growing demand for restraint and solutions. The World Tourism Organization, as well as the World Travel and Tourism Council, have explicitly called for increased focus on sustainability when creating policies and managing global tourism. There is an urgent need to protect the resources that attract tourists to destinations around the globe. The recent pandemic has prompted the world to recognise that destinations such as Venice and Amsterdam can recover from over-tourism through more sustainable practices if allowed to do so. In the state of Florida, there is increased pressure to protect natural attractions, including the state's 825 miles of beaches,</p>	<p>Distance Learning, Full time, Part time;</p> <p>A non-European system of calculating credits</p>

				<p>the Everglades, the Keys, coral reefs, springs, and mangroves. Other alarming events, such as red tide, climate change, sea-level rise, and extreme storm events have all raised awareness of the vulnerability of the tourism industry, both locally and abroad.</p> <p>This innovative degree recognizes the importance of sustainable operations in the tourism industry today, its impacts on the planet, and the increasing demand for a more sustainable approach to managing hospitality and tourism businesses. This unique, fully-online program, offered through the Chaplin School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, is an interdisciplinary collaboration with the Department of Earth and Environment of the College of Arts, Science, and Education. It features a blended curriculum comprised of the most- relevant existing courses from each department, as well as a host of new courses specifically designed for the degree.</p> <p>Students pursuing this degree will acquire the knowledge and tools needed to become industry leaders in the management of sustainable tourism standards. This expertise will contribute to protecting the world's natural and cultural resources, preserving them for future generations. Students will learn to apply these skills and lead through advocacy, conservation, and community partnerships. Topics covered include socioeconomic, environmental, and cultural impacts, with respect to responsible business practices and local governance. In a nutshell, the overarching thrust of the program is to teach students how tourism can adapt to and mitigate climate change, becoming a key sector in the transition to low-carbon economies.</p>	
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Note. Authors, according to the research

The collected data indicates that Italy, Netherlands, Sweden, France, Greece, Germany, Armenia, Portugal, the USA, and Great Britain are countries that offer opportunities to study tourism and sustainable development. However, the bachelor's program at the Georgian Technical University, specifically on the faculty of sustainable development of mountains, titled 'Sustainable Mountain Tourism and Hospitality Management,' stands out as distinctly different from the mentioned programs. Furthermore, the curriculum includes subjects related to mountain tourism and hospitality, training courses regarding mountain knowledge and safe tourism, as well as economics and business.

The structure of the educational program provides numerous opportunities to students.

- The program lasts for 4 years, comprising 240 ECTS, and is conducted on a full-time basis in the Georgian language.
- Students engage in:
- Learning fundamental subjects
 - Learning business, tourism, and hospitality industry subjects
 - Learning sustainable development and its principals, including sustainable mountain development
 - Learning subjects in field of mountain
 - Field practice
 - Writing Bachelor's thesis

The program's distinctive feature is the opportunity to study at least 2 foreign languages. Subjects are classified into 3 pillars: Obligatory and obligatory elective, Optional/elective, and Free credits

The course itself is unique in Georgian educational system and has gained a lot of students' interest. Notably, it is fully funded by the government as a priority direction. The management team of the program is planning to offer master's program and collaborate with other universities around the world. It is important to understand the connection between sustainable development and mountain tourism. The close connection can be explained by the positive impacts that mountain tourism and sustainable development can bring to the region, contributing significantly to overall sustainable development. This assertion is supported by UNWTO approaches (Figure 1. Mountain Tourism Sustainable Development)

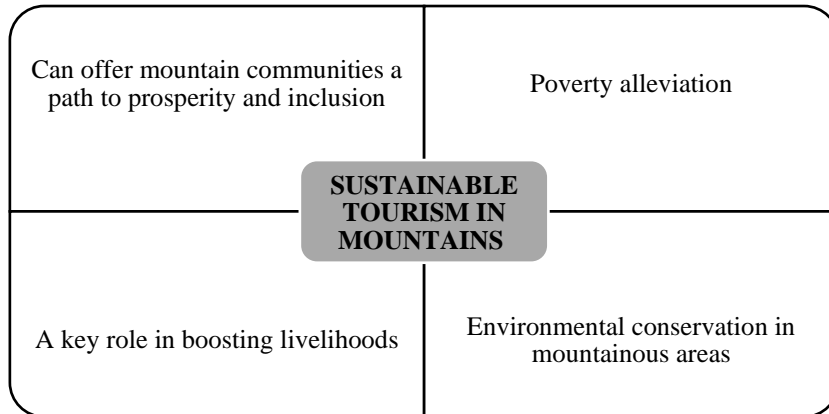


Figure 1. Mountain Tourism Sustainable Development

Note. Authors, according to UNWTO

The integration of sustainability into educational programs for tourism and hospitality is highly relevant and represents the future direction for educational systems. Sustainable tourism is particularly important for regions facing migration and employment challenges. Raising awareness, creating educational programs, and implementing policies is a must in order to achieve SDGs.

The example of Georgia can serve as a model for other countries, inspiring them to follow suit by funding educational programs that integrate sustainability into their curricula. For educational system, it is also important to have partnerships with other universities.

From the studied practices, all masters' programs are unique and provide the opportunity for in-depth knowledge about how to evaluate tourism and plan for future tourism from a sustainability perspective. Bachelor's degree programs are more informative and aim to prepare professionals/managers in the field of sustainable tourism management. Both of them are important on international level, especially for developing countries, where achieving sustainability is a sensitive challenge.

Conclusion

Based on the collected data, it is evident that there are various programs available. However, a different and holistic approach to sustainability is not visible. The educational programs in the field of sustainability are highly significant, attracting an increasing number of students annually. For countries like Georgia, sustainable tourism development, particularly in mountainous regions, holds paramount importance. The residents of these areas face numerous challenges, and sustainable tourism development emerges as a pivotal tool for regional progress. This promotes the achievement of sustainable development goals

and has a positive impact on the quality of life. Furthermore, it promises decent working conditions, supports knowledge sharing, and strives to make opportunities affordable for everyone throughout their lifetime. As earlier discussed, the field of tourism offers a wide range of bachelor's and master's programs. However, Georgian academic programs are directly aimed at regional development, which will contribute to the economic development of the region. Additionally, they are specifically designed to achieve sustainable development goals. The future of integrating sustainability into educational programs looks promising, given the increasing demand. Universities are recognizing their responsibility towards sustainable development and are actively working to support it. In order to achieve sustainable development goals, which are related with educational systems, increased support is essential from government, policies, and the development of educational and certification programs. It is also intriguing to establish a network where universities collaborate, fostering exchange programs to share experiences. This network could organize workshops, conferences, and webinars to facilitate a broader exchange of ideas

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