




RS Global
Journals

Scholarly Publisher
RS Global Sp. z O.O.
ISNI: 0000 0004 8495 2390

Dolna 17, Warsaw, Poland 00-773
Tel: +48 226 0 227 03
Email: editorial_office@rsglobal.pl

JOURNAL	International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Economy
p-ISSN	2412-8368
e-ISSN	2414-1305
PUBLISHER	RS Global Sp. z O.O., Poland
ARTICLE TITLE	TOURISM CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES IN THE MOUNTAINOUS AJARA: ON THE BESHUMI RESORT EXAMPLE
AUTHOR(S)	Merab Putkaradze, Landa Putkaradze, Sandro Duadze
ARTICLE INFO	Merab Putkaradze, Landa Putkaradze, Sandro Duadze. (2023) Tourism Challenges and Perspectives in the Mountainous Ajara: on the Beshumi Resort Example. <i>International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Economy</i> . 4(44). doi: 10.31435/rsglobal_ijite/30122023/8077
DOI	https://doi.org/10.31435/rsglobal_ijite/30122023/8077
RECEIVED	20 October 2023
ACCEPTED	25 November 2023
PUBLISHED	28 November 2023
LICENSE	 This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License .

© The author(s) 2023. This publication is an open access article.

TOURISM CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES IN THE MOUNTAINOUS AJARA: ON THE BESHUMI RESORT EXAMPLE

Merab Putkaradze

Professor, Department of Geography, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, Georgia
ORCID ID: 0000-0003-3644-4626

Landa Putkaradze

Human Geography Ph.D. student, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia

Sandro Duadze

II year student of Geography, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, Georgia

DOI: https://doi.org/10.31435/rsglobal_ijite/30122023/8077

ARTICLE INFO

Received 20 October 2023

Accepted 25 November 2023

Published 28 November 2023

KEYWORDS

Resort, Beshumi, Resource, Economy, Tourism.

ABSTRACT

Keeping the population in the mountainous regions and their social and economic development is one of the significant challenges of modern times. Therefore sustainable development of highlands highly depends on the rational usage of local natural resources. In this line, the priority is given to touristic-recreational resources in the mountainous Ajara, which are not completely assimilated yet. Touristic-recreational resources of mountain-climatic resort Beshumi and the properties of its application for touristic purposes are studied in the work via the application of traditional and modern methods. The development level of the tourism industry and originalities of tourists` dynamics are established. Potential of tourists` transmittance is evaluated and the challenges existed towards the resort are determined. Local population`s attitude towards the tourism is found out, an in line with fields of regional economy - tourism priorities are evaluated and its further development perspectives are set.

Citation: Merab Putkaradze, Landa Putkaradze, Sandro Duadze. (2023) Tourism Challenges and Perspectives in the Mountainous Ajara: on the Beshumi Resort Example. *International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Economy*. 4(44). doi: 10.31435/rsglobal_ijite/30122023/8077

Copyright: © 2023 Merab Putkaradze, Landa Putkaradze, Sandro Duadze. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the **Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY)**. The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) or licensor are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.

Introduction.

Society`s harmonious development in modern times is one of the significant challenges, which is being formed due to the uneven distribution of natural conditions and the resource potential from one side and because of the difference between the social and economic levels from the other side. Accordingly, discussion of the problem in this regard and setting a references for its settlement constitutes quite urgent matter. The mentioned challenge is mode distinctly shaped in the mountain region, including in Georgia. In this regard, the foregoing study reviews one of the most densely populated mountainous region (Ajara) in Georgia, where due to unstable natural conditions, more or less renovation of the economy field structure became necessary and development of the tourism industry. Coming out of this, the existing challenges of mountain-climatic resort Beshumi (located in mountainous Ajara) and its further development perspectives are studied.

The main objective of the study is to evaluate the potential of touristic-recreational resources level of tourism industry`s development, dynamic of tourists, ecological transmittance potential of

tourists of Beshumi resort, the challenges existing towards the resort and to set its further development perspectives. In order to achieve the study object, the following tasks should be solved:

- Evaluate the geographical location of the resort for the transport accessibility by tourists and between the recreational regions of the country as well;
 - Evaluate the touristic-recreational potential of resources of the resort;
 - Study the touristic industry of the resort and set the perspectives of its further development;
 - Establish the originalities of dynamics of the number of tourists and set its further increase possibilities;
 - Establish existing challenges of the resort and set the perspectives of its further development;
- Object of the study is Beshumi resort, which is located at Khulo Municipality high-mountain zone, in particular on the territory adjacent to Goderdzi Pass and Batumi-Akhalsikhe Highway.

Literature overview and the study methods.

Sustainable development of mountainous regions constitutes a significant challenge not only in research region but throughout the whole world. Therefore, a number of important researches (Baco & Gabor, 2021; Covaci, et al, 2021; Koulov, & Zhelezov, 2016; Slusariuc, & Bica, 2015.) are conducted in order to increase the living standard in the mountainous regions and effective results are achieved by implementing the references (Bonzanigo, et al, 2016; Dodds, 2007; Abuselidze & Johann, 2017; Abuselidze & Devadze, 2018; Messerli, 2012; Salukvadze & Backhaus, 2020; Lun, et al, 2016; Richins, 2016; Weingartner & Gunya, 2016; Sakhno, et al., 2022) set in line with theoretical approaches and the practical resolutions regarding the social and economic development of highlands. One of the important perspectives for sustainable development of mountainous regions throughout the world is tourism and some significant researches are to be conducted (Dornier & Mauri, 2018; Bonzanigo, et al; 2016; Kušcer, et al, 2017; Milicevic, et al, 2021; Safranov, 2017; Wagenseil, 2016) in Georgia and the research region in order to set the priorities of its development (Applis, 2022; Gogitidze, et al, 2022; Gugushvili, et al, 2017; Salukvadze, et al, 2019; Putkaradze & Abuselidze, 2019; Putkaradze & Abuselidze, 2022; Putkaradze & Putkaradze, 2022; Putkaradze et al, 2022).

Tourism, as one of the priority fields of an economy is more or less related to natural and social-economic factors of society's development. Coming out of this, complex study of the case requires the application of traditional and modern research methods as well. Resort's development perspectives were found out via methods (Birjakov, 2012) of touristic-recreational resources and tourists transmittance potential of the research territory. Attitude of local population and tourists towards the resort was determined via sociological studies and in-depth interviews (Lu, & Nepal, 2009). In order to determine the tourism priorities in the regional economy's field structure, a balanced and coordination failure theory methods (Cooper, 2008) were applied. Besides, statistical, comparison, field research, space-time analysis and the other methods were used.

Results and discussion.

Beshumi resort is located in high-mountain zone (elevation 1850-1900m above the sea level) of Khulo Municipality in Autonomous Republic of Ajara. Resort's transport accessibility for tourists is quite easy as it is located 6km away from Batumi-Akhalsikhe international highway, in particular from Goderdzi Pass and 117 km away from City of Batumi. Positive side of resort's geographical location is that it is situated between two significant touristic-recreational regions of Georgia: Ajara and Borjomi-Akhalsikhe, that grants the resort with opportunity to be visited even more potential tourists. It is the only mountain-climatic resort in Ajara, which operates since 1937. During the summer period, the resort is active since middle June until the middle of September. The main character of touristic-recreational resource of the resort is that it is located in the humid and dry subtropical climate-dividing zone, where average summer temperature is +17°C and amount of precipitation 1100mm, and relative humidity of air 72% (it increases up to 82-83% in sea coast of Ajara). The main dignity of resort is that it has a best thermal conditions for leisure during the summer period. Besides, coniferous forest is on the territory of resort and adjacent to it, which has an ideally pure ionized air. Moreover - it is possible to collect a mushrooms and wild fruits on the territories adjacent to resort. Local landscape and coniferous forest creates visually beautiful natural and landscape sights (see Picture 1).

Resort is located on an inclined slope of Arsiani Ridge, the area of which is 61 hectare. Besides, there is a huge potential for resort's extension and in case of increased touristic flow in the nearest future there will be no issues regarding it. Touristic industry of the resort, in particular the tourists' accommodation objects are presented mainly by up to 1050 private houses, about 32 cottage house and 5 small type hotels (each having 3 to 5 apartments). Total accommodation capacity of the resort approximately equals to 5450 beds.



Picture 1. Resort Beshumi.

Catering system of tourists are mainly presented by an individual food objects of holidaymakers and 1 small café; there are also 3 small fun objects for kids and 1 for adults. There are no sport areas therein. A horse walks are possible. A retail trade network is well developed comparing to other service fields of resort and one can there acquire the food products and other items as well. 2-3 drugstores and the medical dispensary operate in the resort. The resort is supplied with continuous electricity and the water supply without schedule. The sewage system is also operational. There are no bank service and the cable internet - Wi-Fi.

Coming out of the goal of the research, it is necessary to study the originalities of dynamics of visitors and tourists. Coming out of this, it is required to evaluate the tourists' transmittance potential, establish the challenges existing towards the resort and set the perspectives of its further development. In general, the main dignity of resort is defined by number of tourists. In order to clarify the topic, it is necessary to review the quantitative properties of dynamics of visitors and tourists (see Table 1).

Table 1. Dynamics of visitors and tourists in Beshumi resort during 2012-2023 years.

	2012	2017	2019	2022	2023
Visitor	6750	7550	9850	10550	11700
Tourist	4250	5500	6650	6850	7750

Source: The table is concluded according to materials of the Tourism Department of Autonomous Republic of Ajara, Administration of the resort Beshumi and the field research materials.

The data brought makes clear that in 2012-2023 years, the number of visitors and tourists as well in Beshumi resort gradually increases. Besides, amount of visitors is considerably higher than amount of tourists, which is common regularity. This circumstance by itself constitutes the perspective for resort's further development. In order to determine the qualitative side of the quantitative indicators mentioned, it is necessary to review in a complex manner the possibilities of receipt and accommodation of tourists at a time, number of tourists and the maximum load potential under the touristic industry existed now (see figure 1).

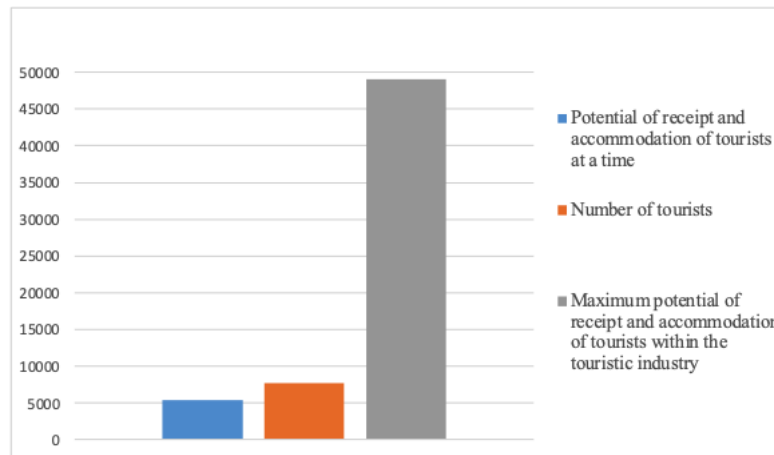


Figure 1. Tourists' transmittance potential of Resort Beshumi (2023).

Source: Authors' calculations.

In recent years the number of visitors and tourists gradually increases (see Table 1). Most part of tourists are presented with population of Batumi and sea coast of Ajara Region. Besides, number of international tourists is gradually increasing, which in average equals to 5-8%. If we foresee that condition that in average, tourists stay at the resort for 10 days, provided touristic season in average consists of 90 days (since 15th of June, until 15th of September) – then resort's total potential by foreseeing an existing accommodation objects (5450 x 9) will be 49050 (see Chart 1).

In order to specify the topic in details, review of tourists' transmittance potential will be required, which will be reviewed in three main types: ecological transmittance potential, tourism's social transmittance potential and the local transmittance potential.

Ecological transmittance potential is object's or area's visiting level, the excess of which often leads to undesirable ecological results. This can be caused by impact of tourists or operation of an infrastructure rendering the service for tourism [Birzhakov, 2012]. In order to determine ecological transmittance potential, firstly it is necessary to make a dynamics on numbers of accommodation places. Number of tourists in Beshumi during the recent years didn't change much, as the resort mainly serves the population of Ajara Region, though an increasing tendencies of international tourists are observed as well. On the basis of study conducted by Tourism Department of Autonomous Republic of Ajara, Administration of the resort and us, by 2023 7750 tourists were having their leisure time in Beshumi. It is known that touristic season of the resort lasts for 90 days or from 15th of June until 15th of September. An average daily load during that period equals to 86 tourists, but number of resort tourists are unevenly distributed during the season. In particular, big part of tourists (70%) comes to August, and 50% of August tourists comes to the first week of August, whilst the public festival "Shuamtoba" is held herein. In order to study the topic in details, firstly it is necessary to find out the conformity of accommodation capacity of resort with number of tourists. As a result of study conducted the following was established: resort's accommodation system is presented by 1050 private house, 3 hotel and 32 cottage houses, the total capacity of which is approximately 5450 beds. Thus, the resort is able to host in average 5450 tourists at a time on a daily basis, whilst average daily touristic load of resort during the season equals to 86, or an average load is 1.6%. Actually, resort's load is at its minimum, but these indicators during the season are drastically different. Most of tourists comes in the first week of August, when an average number of tourists is 2470, or average load increase up to 45.3%. It's obvious that maximum load of the resort at its peak period does not exceed 1/2 part of its maximum load, but some discomfort is observed during the resort's peak period. In particular, adjacent territory is polluted with waste, level of noise increases, the green cover (plants) is trampled down, air pollution (by vehicle exhaust) is increased, etc. Existing situation is even more aggravated by 1200-1500 visitors visiting the resort and using the resort infrastructure during 1-3 days (in the peak period). It's true that ecological condition of the resort is not alarming for now, but it is necessary to apply the active measures in line with existing problems.

The second type of transmittance potential is tourism's social transmittance potential, which is a level of visit, the excess of which leads to the travelers' worsened impressions [Birjhakov, 2012]. There are almost no issues at the resort in this regard, as the everyday load of the resort is very low. In order to clarify the topic in details, in 2022 and 2023 years, we have conducted the sociological survey. 142 respondents were interviewed, which were questioned if they found number of tourists discomforting; 92% of them (131 respondents out of 142) have answered negatively (no). Thus, the resort's problem in line with tourism's social transmittance is quite insignificant.

In order to completely study the subject, it is necessary to clarify the third type of transmittance potential of tourists – a local transmittance potential, which implies the quality of visit, which leads us to negative results of local culture and up to worsened relations between the local population and the tourists [Birjhakov, 2012]. Actually, there is no issue in this regard at the resort, as the resort itself operates seasonally and it has no permanent population residing therein. In this line it can be said that actually, there never was some conflict at the resort between the foreign tourists and the locals. Moreover – we have interviewed 46 foreign tourists by questioning if they would visit the resort again and 36 of them have answered positively, and the question whether they would share a good impression on resort or not, 39 of them (or 84.8%) have answered yes. As a result of interviewing the locals with question, whether they wish many foreign tourists to visit the resort or not, 137 of 142 interviewees (or 96.5%) have answered positively. By determination of local social transmittance potential there is found out that a good perspectives for resort's further development exists therein.

Research makes clear that resort's useful economic-geographical location, touristic-recreational resources necessary for development of mountaion-climatic resort and currently existing touristic industry creates quite good conditions for resort's functioning. Besides, the following also should be mentioned: on the background of resources existing at the resort, the number of tourists is comparatively less, that by itself rises the questions, do the challenges existing towards the resort require analyzing and setting the perspectives for their further development?

Main challenge of the resort is of Khulo – Goderdzi Pass (elevation: 2025 m) 23.5km section of Batumi-Akhaltsikhe International Highway, where development and improvement works are held by international companies for several years, thus hindering the transportation of tourists. Presumably, by season of 2024 the mentioned section (by maintaining an international standards) will be assigned into exploitation, thus, joining Borjomi-Bakuriani recreational region with shorter road to most significant recreational zone of Georgia located at Batumi and Kobuleti. From the other side, Beshumi is located between the mentioned recreational zones, creating all the conditions to increase the number of tourists of the research resort.

Accommodation object for resort's tourists are mainly presented by small houses, a big part of which is unable to satisfy the modern standards in visual and comfort manner as well. Most of the mentioned accommodation objects belong to local population of Ajara Region, that by itself hinders the renting level. As of touristic cottages, it is true that they are not operating with complete load, but at their peak period they are unable to satisfy the increased demand. Joint capacity of all of 3 hotels existing at the resort is up to 24 apartments, which by itself lowers the number of comparatively comfortable accommodation places.

One of the challenges of the resort constitute a low-developed catering system for tourists. Actually, there are no developed food objects at the resort, but one small café only. There is no restaurant for tourists, which would highly improve the catering system for tourists.

A low level of fun object at the resort is completely unable to satisfy tourists' needs. A horse walks remains the main fun and walk mean, but there exist no specially arranged areas.

Significant problem is inexistence of cable, optical internet and Wi-Fi, that makes a discomfort for visitors and tourists and is related to huge expenses.

Resort's geographical location, diversity of touristic-recreational resources and ecological transmittance potential of tourists creates the precondition that quite good perspectives exist for resort's further development. Khulo-Goderdzi highway presumably will enter into exploitation by 2024, which highly encourage 1-3-day visits of Ajara sea-coast recreants to Beshumi especially during the off-season at the seaside. An effective management in this regard will allow the tourists to benefit from different type of touristic products, which has a huge perspective not only for the research resort, but in effective application of touristic-recreational resources of the mountainous Ajara.

Increase of number of tourists at the resort is highly depended on even more development of an independent touristic industry, especially regarding the accommodation system's arrangement. It is desirable to build a new hotels at the resort having all the services, including the pools (none of them exist by now). Also, it should be mentioned that some particular groups of existing houses were built a long time ago, which are unable to meet the modern requirements. Besides, the mentioned houses occupy quite large area and in line with rational application of territory, it is necessary to construct the hotels and recreational objects on their basis.

Arrangement of the catering system at the resort is extremely significant, which should be focused on tasting and consuming the locally made natural products and the local dishes, which will promote the opportunities for gastronomy tourism's development.

Urgent measures should be applied to arrange the cable, optical and cellular internet network, which will enable a Wi-Fi as well.

Resort's fun objects need an extension, especially in line with arranging the modern mechanical attractions for kids. Arrangement of big and small sport areas will somehow attract the tourists and group of tourists as well.

Significant works to be performed in line with information service. Advertising of resort would have a special importance for formation of touristic product, where the resort's main properties will be represented via World Travel Guide and some other information services as well. Urgent measure to be taken for tourists' attraction is to join the automatized systems booking the touristic services (Booking, Airbnb, Amadeus, etc.).

Application of touristic-recreational potential of mountainous Ajara should constitute one of main trend of sustainable development of the region. In order to determine a place of tourism in the field structure of regional economy, a balanced theory method was applied (Cooper, 2008). As a result of the research (Putkaradze & Abuseridze, 2019) conducted by the mentioned theory, there was established that there are no further perspectives for development of economy's leading field – agriculture on the background of lack of land resources and worsened ecological condition. Besides, other fields of economy are very weakly developed. Therefore, these fields are unable to implement the significant changes in economy's increase. Coming out of this, according the balanced theory method applied – development of regional economy hasn't big perspectives. In order to determine the specialization of fields of regional economy, perspectives of some particular fields of economy were analyzed via application of coordination failure theory (Cooper, 2008), on the basis of which and according to the research held the following is established: tourism industry should be prioritized in regional economy's further development. Accordingly, essential priorities in the policy of development of economy of Georgia's mountainous regions should be assigned to tourism development and it should be realized via implementation of effective municipal programs.

Conclusion.

The research clarifies that Beshumi resort's geographical location, touristic-recreational resources and the transmittance potential of tourists creates broad opportunities and the perspectives for its further development. For now, a low-developed infrastructure remains as significant challenge for the resort, the arrangement of which is possible via encouraging a private sector or by implementation of correct management of municipal programs as well. Tourism development in mountainous Ajara will also be essentially depended on the determination of its priorities in the economy's field structure and on execution of effective marketing and financial policy by country.

REFERENCES

1. Abuselidze, G., & Johann, M. (2017). The Polish Tourists' Perceptions of the Resort Hotels in Georgia. In *E-Journal of the International Conference Economic, Legal and Social Problems of Modern Development*, Vol. 2. doi:10.2139/ssrn.3047410.
2. Abuselidze, G., & Devadze, N. (2018a). Stakeholders and their role in sustainable tourism development. *Biannual International Scientific Practical Conference SEU ISC*, Georgian National University SEU, Tbilisi.
3. Abuselidze, G., & Devadze, N. (2018b). The impact of stakeholders on the sustainable tourism development. *4th International Scientific-practical Conferences "Modern technologies, socio-economic development problems and ways of solving them"*, Book of proceedings, Batumi, Georgia.

4. Abuselidze, G., & Devadze, N. (2021). Stakeholder Perceptions and Models of Engagement for Sustainable Tourism Development in Adjara Autonomous Republic. *International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Economy*, 3(35), 1-6.
5. Applis, S. (2022). Crises around concepts of hospitality in the mountainous region of Svaneti in the north of Georgia. *Tourizm and hospitality*. Issue. 3, 416-434.
6. Bacoș, I. B.; & Gabor, M. R. (2021). Tourism Economy. Mountain Tourism: Quantitative Analysis of Winter Destinations in Romania. *Economics*. 9, 143–159.
7. Birjakov, M. (2012). *Theory of Tourism*. Tbilisi.
8. Bonzanigo, L., Giupponi, C., & Balbi, S. (2016). Sustainable tourism planning and climate change adaptation in the Alps: A case study of winter tourism in mountain communities in the dolomites. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 24(4), 637–652.
9. Cooper, C. (2008). *Tourism: principles and practice*. Harlow: Pearson Education.
10. Dodds, R. (2007). Sustainable tourism and policy implementation: Lessons from the case of Calvia, Spain. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 10(1), 296-322.
11. Dornier, R.; Mauri, C. (2018). Overview: Tourism sustainability in the Alpine region: The major trends and challenges. *Worldw. Hosp.Tour. Themes*, 10, 136–139.
12. Gogitidze, G; Nadareishvili, N; Harun R; Lrien, L. & Muresan, L. (2022). Exploring Residents' Perceptions towards Tourism Development—A Case Study of the Adjara Mountain Area. *Sustanabilitu*, 15(1), 492.
13. Gugushvili, T., Salukvadze, G. & Salukvadze, J. (2017). Fragmented development: Tourism-driven economic changes in Kazbegi, Georgia. *Annals of Agrarian Science*, 15(1), 49-54.
14. Koulov, B. & Zhelezov, G. (2016). *Sustainable mountain regions: Challenges and perspectives in Southeastern Europe*. Springer International Publishing.
15. Kuščer, K., Mihalič, T. & Pechlaner, H. (2017). Innovation, sustainable tourism and environments in mountain destination development: A comparative analysis of Austria, Slovenia and Switzerland. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 25(4), 489-504.
16. Lu, J., & Nepal, K. (2009). Sustainable Tourism Research: An Analysis of the Papers Published in the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 17(1), 5-16.
17. Lun, L.-M., Pechlaner, H., & Volgger, M. (2016). Rural tourism development in mountain regions: Identifying success factors, challenges and potentials. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 17(4), 389-411.
18. Messerli, B. (2012). Global change and the world's mountains. *Mountain research and development*, 32(S1), S55-S63.
19. Milicevic, S.; Boskovic, N. & Lakicevic, M. (2021). Sustainable tourism development in mountain areas in Sumadija and Western Serbia. *J. Mt. Sci.* 18, 735–748.
20. Putkaradze, M. & Abuselidze, G. (2019). The Impact of Tourism on Business Development in Mountain Regions: A Case Study. *International Journal of Economics and Business Administration*, 7(3), 70-83.
21. Putkaradze, M., Michalski, T. & G. Abuselidze, G. (2022). Tourism and Recreational Resources Usage Perspectives Through According to Mountainous Adjara's Example. *Economics and Management*, 19(2), 27-39.
22. Putkaradze, M., & Abuselidze, G. (2022). Socio-economic aspects of potential migrants of the mountainous region of Adjara. *Journal of Geography, Politics and Society*, 12(2), 8-15.