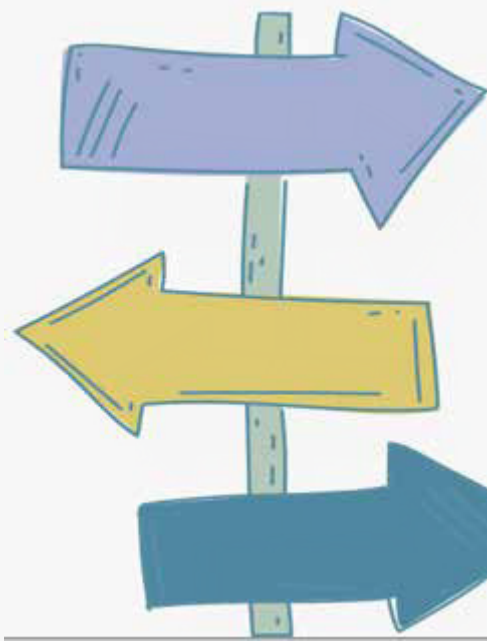




Tourism Sector as a Component of Economic Development on the Example of Vagharshapat United Community

Report

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TOURISM SECTOR AS A COMPONENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ON THE EXAMPLE OF VAGHARSHAPAT UNITED COMMUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Vagharshapat community is one of the touristic cities of the Republic of Armenia, the importance and development prospects of which are indicated both in the development plans of Armavir region and Vagharshapat community. In particular 2019-2023 Vagharshapat Community five-year Development program focuses on the development of touristic opportunities to make it a touristic center of the region.

Based on the above, 3 main objectives of the research were defined:

1. What kind of strategy and actions were developed and implemented by the local government to achieve the goal of the community development plan?
2. How effective were the established strategy and actions for the development of the sector?
3. What are the obstacles and shortcomings of the implementation of the tourism development strategy by municipal authorities, what are the practical solutions in the context of implementation of sectoral policy?

The following methods were selected for the study: desk research and interviews with representatives of the tourism sector.

According to the study results, the following important issues were raised, which will need further solution and active follow-up:

1. There is no sustainable cooperation between stakeholders of the tourism sector. Basically, cooperation is activated during certain holidays and events. It is necessary to make cooperation regular and create sustainable foundations.
2. Existing official documents related to the development of the tourism sector, in particular, the community five-year development program, are more declarative and do not contain measurable actions to achieve the set goals, actions implemented for the development of the sector are not sufficiently presented in community reports.
3. Organizations operating in the tourism sector, particularly museums, need innovative technologies and furniture upgrade, which will make them more attractive and

interactive for tourists. In addition, there is a need to create and strengthen cooperation with tourist companies, to be included in tourist routes more often.

4. At the same time, organizations from the tourism sector raise the issue of maintaining city's cleanliness, the importance of creating entertainment and food outlets to attract tourists and keep them in the community.
5. In order to become a touristic center in the region, it is required to not only repair and improve infrastructure, increase the number and quality of tourist services, but also to create a tourism brand, which still relate mostly to churches of the community. There is a need to carry out more targeted and clear communication, presenting touristic advantages of Vagharshapat community, from the rich historical and cultural heritage to the history of the city.
6. It is also necessary to improve language skills of sector professionals in order to ensure effective communication with tourists.

Following recommendations were developed to address existing issues and development directions:

1. Develop a targeted, feasible and measurable strategy for tourism development in the community through engaging stakeholders and interested parties in discussion and development processes. The tourism development strategy should contain an action plan with timeline, including persons responsible for implementation, key performance indicators (KPIs) and expected budget.
2. For the development of the tourism sector in the community, promote cooperation among private and public sectors, state and community organizations, and providing them with institutional grounds (through signing contracts and memorandums), which will create an opportunity for greater efforts around target goals and attracting new resources.
3. Financial allocations and programs allocated for the development of tourism sector should be implemented not only indirectly (in addition to the mediated version of other sectors) but also have a direct version, which will also emphasize its importance and significance for the community development.
4. Develop a realistic communication policy and feasible tourism strategy to more effectively present community's opportunities to a wider public via cooperating with local and international media.
5. Involve other interested parties from service and tourism sectors in dialogue and discussions processes that address needs and solutions of sectoral problems, which will increase accessibility and effectiveness of developed strategies and programs.
6. Organize large-scale celebrations during national holidays in cooperation with partners and make them regular (e.g., annual) to attract more tourist flow.
7. Plan and organize regular meetings and discussions with stakeholders engaged in tourist sector to develop new ideas and implement joint projects addressing sectoral development perspectives and challenges.

8. Initiate foreign language courses for employees engaged in tourism sector, such as guides, museum, service providing employees for more effective communications.