

IMPORTANT DIRECTIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECOLOGICAL TOURISM IN THE CONTEXT OF NEW UZBEKISTAN.

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Annotation: This article explores the key directions for developing ecological tourism in the context of New Uzbekistan. It highlights the importance of preserving natural ecosystems while promoting sustainable tourism practices. The study analyzes the current state of ecotourism in the country, the potential for growth, and strategic measures needed for further development. The role of environmental awareness, infrastructure improvement, and government support are emphasized as critical factors in fostering eco-tourism in Uzbekistan's new era of reform and modernization.

Keywords: Ecological tourism, sustainable development, New Uzbekistan, environmental awareness, tourism infrastructure, eco-tourism strategy, green economy.

Ecotourism is a type of tourism that involves visiting natural attractions and participating in environmentally responsible activities. It is one of the most popular forms of tourism in the world, combining leisure with education. The concept of ecotourism emerged as a result of the historical evolution of humanity's changing attitude toward nature and the environment. This paper examines the theoretical and methodological foundations of the ecotourism phenomenon.

Uzbekistan is considered one of the fastest-growing countries in the world. In recent years, ecotourism has become a distinct segment of the tourism industry and a new direction within the sector. United Nations General Assembly resolutions from 2012 to 2019 have recognized the importance of developing ecotourism to preserve natural resources and promote international cooperation in this field. It is well known that Uzbekistan has great potential for the development of ecotourism, the creation of a unique and sustainable network of ecotourism routes, and the integration of such services into the international tourism market, making the country attractive to tourists of all categories [3;].

In Clause 3.2 of the Action Strategy on the Five Priority Areas of Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2017–2021, the following goals are set: “the rapid development of the tourism industry, increasing its role and share in the economy, diversifying and improving the quality of tourism services [1;p.5], and expanding tourism infrastructure.” Furthermore, Clause 4.3 emphasizes “ensuring that people live in an environmentally safe environment” [2;p.9]. Indeed, one of the most effective ways to ensure sustainable development in the country, protect the population socio-economically, and maintain ecological safety in the long term is the development of ecotourism.

Research methods

The term "ecology" was introduced in 1866 by the German zoologist Ernst Haeckel. Literally, it means "the science of the home" (from the Greek "oikos" – dwelling, habitat). Ecology emerged as a scientific discipline at the beginning of the 20th century, and the term began to be widely used in the 1960s when the environmental crisis started to be discussed as a crisis in the relationship between humans and their environment [5, p. 10].

Today, tourism has become one of the rapidly developing infrastructure sectors that brings significant income to the economies of countries around the world. Currently, it accounts for one-tenth of global GDP and consumer sales, 8% of world exports, 30% of global trade in services, over 11% of international investments, and provides one out of every eight jobs in production. By the year 2030, the fastest-growing sectors in the tourism industry — such as shopping tourism, medical tourism, agro-tourism, and eco-tourism — are expected to double in volume worldwide.

Results and discussion

Ecotourism is defined as a responsible and sustainable form of tourism in which the natural environment, culture, and wildlife are of primary importance. In the previous sections, we discussed how this type of activity allows travelers to explore the outdoors without causing negative impacts on local communities or ecological sustainability. Now, let us focus on the current state and future prospects of these processes in Uzbekistan.

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing and highest-earning sectors in the world, contributing to the strengthening of international socio-economic, cultural, and spiritual relations. As one of the world's leading countries with rich cultural and historical potential, Uzbekistan is paying increasing attention to the development of its tourism industry. Nevertheless, the study and analysis of this issue have revealed a number of large-scale challenges associated with the sustainable development of tourism in the country.

In recent years, foreign travelers have shown increasing interest in visiting Uzbekistan due to its rich cultural heritage and stunning natural beauty. While this emerging trend presents significant opportunities for the development of the ecotourism sector in the country, it also brings with it several challenges—such as the low quality of services, insufficient accommodation infrastructure, and limited opportunities for local communities to participate in the hospitality industry.

This raises an important question: Why should we develop ecotourism in Uzbekistan, and why is the government paying increasing attention to this sector?

The advantages of developing ecotourism in Uzbekistan include substantial economic benefits for communities and regions. Ecotourism can create jobs and economic opportunities through employment in hotels, restaurants, guiding services, transportation, and more. This contributes to generating sustainable income streams and helps improve the living standards of local populations. Over time, it can also lead to a more equitable distribution of resources and encourage inclusive growth in rural and underdeveloped areas.

One of the main challenges to the sustainability of Uzbekistan's ecotourism sector lies in the lack of effective marketing strategies to ensure the fair distribution of tourists. Although attractive travel packages have been developed to attract more visitors, the absence of incentive schemes makes it difficult for small operators to compete with larger counterparts.

Ecotourism is a small yet integral component of the broader sustainable tourism industry. Its potential as an effective tool for sustainable development is the key reason why



many developing countries are now incorporating it into their economic development strategies. As a form of alternative tourism, ecotourism involves visiting natural areas with the purpose of learning about or engaging in environmentally responsible activities. This type of tourism is based on natural experiences that contribute to the economic and social development of local communities.

Furthermore, the development of ecological tourism supports environmental protection systems, biodiversity conservation, and the preservation of unique natural areas. It also contributes to the growth of local incomes and presents a promising market for investment projects.

Uzbekistan's favorable geographical location—at the crossroads of routes from east to west and from southern to northern countries—its climatic conditions, the unique network of protected natural areas, and the rich diversity of landscapes offer significant opportunities for the promotion of ecotourism destinations.

Currently, the system of protected areas in Uzbekistan includes 8 nature reserves, 2 natural national parks, 1 national park, 1 biosphere reserve, 12 wildlife sanctuaries, and 7 natural monuments.

It is also worth emphasizing that more than 7,000 historical and cultural monuments have been preserved in this fertile land, once part of the Great Silk Road. This rich heritage of the Uzbek people has been carefully protected and passed down from generation to generation [4].

According to the Decree of the Head of State dated December 2, 2016, titled “On Measures to Ensure the Rapid Development of the Tourism Sector of the Republic of Uzbekistan,” tourism was designated as a strategic sector of Uzbekistan's economy. In 2018–2019, a priority action plan for tourism development was approved by the President's resolution dated August 16, 2017. The adoption of four significant documents related to the tourism sector in February 2017 by the President demonstrates the state's strong focus on tourism development.

These documents define priority tasks aimed at resolving accumulated problems in the sector, enhancing tourism potential, and promoting domestic tourism through various incentives and preferences.

Thus, ecotourism helps develop communities by providing an alternative livelihood focused on the sustainable use of resources—particularly biodiversity conservation—that delivers ecological experiences to travelers, preserves the environment, and generates economic benefits. However, achieving the goals of ecotourism depends on its ecological and environmental sustainability as well as its economic viability.

Overall, Uzbekistan offers numerous opportunities for ecotourism, where tourists can enjoy beautiful nature, rich cultural heritage, and the hospitality of local communities [6; 524–528].

List of literature used

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