



FACTORS AND PRINCIPLES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECOLOGICAL TOURISM IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract

In Uzbekistan, in recent years, there has been a dynamic development of the tourism industry. This is due to the expansion and strengthening of interethnic ties, the country's integration into the international tourism market, increasing the level of professionalism in promoting the cultural, historical and spiritual heritage of Uzbekistan, and improving the quality of tourist services.

In this regard, much attention is paid to the development of ecological tourism, which is one of the effective tools for environmental protection and an important element of sustainable development, actively contributing to the preservation of natural and cultural heritage, improving the well-being of the local population. Recommendations are provided to promote ecological tourism practices in the area.

Keywords: ecological tourism, environmental impact, sustainability, conservation awareness, nature.

Introduction

As established by the International Ecological tourism Society (TIES) in 1990, ecological tourism is “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.” Another widely cited definition of ecological tourism is “targeted travel to natural areas to understand the culture and natural history of the environment; taking care not to disturb the integrity of the ecosystem; creating economic opportunities that make conservation of natural resources beneficial to local communities” [1].





Data and Methods

In the process of research, theoretical methods of induction, deduction, generalization and comparison were used. The necessary materials are investigated on the basis of the methods of typological analysis, the synthesis of statistical data.

Main Results

Currently, tourism has become one of the leading sectors of the world economy. In this regard, Uzbekistan pays special attention to the modernization of the tourism industry, the development and improvement of the regulatory framework for the sustainable development of the industry, the organization of servicing foreign guests in accordance with international standards.

In the period from 2017 to 2022, the number of foreign tourists arriving in Uzbekistan almost doubled. If in 2017 our country received 2.7 million tourists, then in 2022 - 5.2 million people [2].

In 2022, tourists mainly arrived in Uzbekistan: from Kazakhstan - 1551.1 thousand people (1783.8 thousand people in 2017), Tajikistan - 1447.8 thousand people (5.5 times more than in 2017 year) and Kyrgyzstan - 1356.9 thousand people (3.6 times more than in 2017). The main purpose of trips of foreign citizens to Uzbekistan is "visiting relatives" - 89.1%. Most of this category of tourists came from Kazakhstan (31.8%), Kyrgyzstan (29.2%) and Tajikistan (27.9%). For the purpose of "rest and leisure", the largest number of tourists came from Russia (37.6%), Kazakhstan (11.2%) and Turkey (6.3%). For reference: Uzbekistan has a visa-free regime for 91 countries of the world. For comparison, in Kazakhstan - for 26 countries, Turkey - for 41 countries, Georgia - for 56 countries. In 2022, the number of tourists arriving in Uzbekistan increased by 3.4 million compared to last year, i.e. growth was more than 2.8 times. This has led to a significant increase in the export of tourism services. If in 2017 the export of tourism services amounted to 546.9 million US dollars, then in 2022 this figure increased by 2.9 times and amounted to 1,610.5 million US dollars. The share of exports of tourism services in the total volume of exports of services of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2017-2022 increased by 1.8 times. If in 2017 this figure was 22.1%, then in 2022 it reached 40.7%.

The results of the reforms in the tourism sector testify to the great potential of the industry. To increase the tourist attractiveness of Uzbekistan on the world stage, it is proposed to develop new areas of tourism, such as ethnic and ecological tourism, as well as the organization of thematic festivals in different regions of the country.





Currently, in most countries of the world, ecological tourism is one of the industries that bring significant income to the national economy. According to the World Tourism Organization, the income from this industry is several trillion dollars a year. Ecological tourism plays a crucial role in life. The fact that Ecological tourism is a guardian of life and flora and fauna as well. It is like a very durable chain. But without ecotourism it can get broken abruptly. As more and more of us become aware of humanity's impact on the planet, an interest in folding active environmentalism into every facet of life also increases. This includes trips and holidays. That's where ecological tourism comes in.

With interest in ecological tourism rising each year, it's probably a good time to explore what this popular phenomenon is all about. Ecological tourism is an umbrella term that refers to tourism that sustains the environment and improves the welfare of local people. It is a type of responsible tourism which aims to minimize any negative impacts on the environment and cultural heritage.

This type of tourism has been growing in popularity over the past few years, as it has many benefits for both tourists and local communities.

Ecological tourism is an industry that has been growing at an exponential rate over the last few decades. The growth in this industry has been driven by many factors, one being the increasing need and growing awareness for sustainability. More and more of us now understand the need for conservation of natural resources and avoidance of environmental degradation.

This growing awareness has led to more people wanting to experience nature firsthand and can be used to teach people about environmental issues, without having to compromise on their environmental or economic footprint. Additionally, ecological tourism is increasingly being seen as a way to learn more about different cultures while supporting local economies. Tourism is a major contributor to the global economy, but it comes with a price. Tourism has been around for centuries, but it has only become a global phenomenon in the last few decades.

Ecological tourism - recreation in the countryside areas (in villages, on farms, in comfortable peasant houses, in farmsteads), during which tourists spend some time lead a rural lifestyle, get acquainted with the local culture and local customs, take part in traditional rural labor [3].

The essence of ecological tourism is clearly reflected in its principles:

- Journeys into nature, and the main content of such trips is acquaintance with wildlife, as well as with local customs and culture.
- Minimization of negative consequences of ecological and socio-cultural nature, maintenance of ecological stability of the environment.





- Promoting the protection of nature and the local socio-cultural environment.
- Ecological education and enlightenment.
- The participation of local residents and their receipt of income from tourism activities, which creates economic incentives for them to protect nature.
- Economic efficiency and contribution to the sustainable development of the visited regions. As we can see, ecological tourism has become a common practice in a particular village is able to:
 - 1) increase the employment of the rural population;
 - 2) increase the level of income of the villagers;
 - 3) develop the infrastructure of the village;
 - 4) increase the social activity of the villagers [4].

Tourism is now one of the most important contributors to economic growth and poverty reduction in developing countries. But tourism also poses many challenges for communities and the environment. The main reason that tourism is bad for communities is that it can lead to over-development of small towns or villages, which can cause many negative effects on locals' quality of life. For example, people have been forced out of their homes because they are not able to afford rising rents from all the tourists coming into their neighborhoods. There are also reported problems with overcrowding, pollution, and rising crime.

Some of the benefits of ecological tourism include:

1. Ecological tourism has a positive impact on the local economy. As tourism becomes more diversified, businesses that are directly related to tourism – such as transportation, lodging, food, and attractions – become more prosperous.
2. It helps protect natural resources. When tourists visit natural areas and ecosystems, they are more likely to conserve these resources because they understand the importance of them.
3. It promotes social and environmental awareness. Through ecological tourism, people can learn about the importance of conservation and find ways to help protect the environment.
4. It builds relationships between people and nature.

There can be some drawbacks to ecological tourism.

For one, ecological tourism can be detrimental to local economies if the local population is not compensated properly. Additionally, ecological tourism can have a negative impact on the environment if the practices of the incoming tourists themselves are not sustainable.



Overall, ecological tourism has many benefits that outweigh its drawbacks. As long as tourists are respectful of the environment and do not damage local ecosystems, ecological tourism should be a positive trend that continues to grow in popularity.

In 2022, environmentalists predict that ecological tourism will continue to increase in popularity, as more people become aware of the benefits of traveling in an environmentally friendly way.

Some popular ecological tourism trends that will be prevalent in this year include eco-adventure trips, wildlife safaris and plant-based vacations.

Furthermore, interest in ecological tourism has resulted in major hotspots of interest forming throughout the world, with conservation groups investing millions into preserving some of these territories. These areas include Yellowstone National Park, Machu Picchu and Galápagos Islands.

Even everyone can help nature by heart. It means volunteering.

Eco-volunteering is a practice whereby tourists take an active role in conservation and environmental projects during their travels. Occasionally, an eco-volunteering role includes breakfast and board. Some examples of eco-volunteering roles include:

- Tree planting
- Litter picking
- Beach cleaning
- Wildlife surveying
- Water conservation
- Education and outreach programmes

Truth be told, whilst there will always be top ecological tourism destinations, it is always worth keeping in mind that it is likely there are ecological tourism opportunities much closer to home. Local nature reserves and environmental projects are always keen for volunteers.

Sustainable tourism can be an important economic solution for many of Uzbekistan's mountainous communities by helping local youth find employment.

Conclusion

Ecological tourism has a number of advantages:

- trips to nature, and the main content of such trips is acquaintance with wildlife, with local customs and culture;
- minimizing the negative consequences of an ecological and socio-cultural nature, maintaining the environmental sustainability of the environment;
- promoting the protection of nature and the local socio-cultural environment;
- ecological education and enlightenment;





- the participation of local residents and their receipt of income from tourism activities, which creates economic incentives for them to protect nature.
- economic efficiency and contribution to the sustainable development of the visited regions.

The main tasks of ecological tourism are:

- constantly, systematically and purposefully cultivate the criterion of environmental equilibrium;
- to harmonize relations between nature, society and economy;
- orient tourism organizations towards the preservation, reproduction and increase in the consumer value of the natural environment by allocating part of the profit from tourism to solve related problems;
- to subordinate the short-term interests of making a profit from tourism to the long-term interests of preserving nature for future generations, increasing recreational and tourist resources, as well as further socio-economic development of local communities based on ecological tourism;
- to form in tourists a sense of personal responsibility for the state of nature and its future, affirming in their minds that they belong to it as an integral organic part. It is necessary to pay attention to three main points of ecological tourism: the first is the reduction of the chaotic flow of tourists. Secondly, most of the ecozones are located in the region, this will give impetus to the development of alternative types of economic activity and additional income for the population. And the third is the improvement of scientific activities in the field of the environment, which will enable the development of ecology in the country.

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