



# THE WAYS AND PROSPECTS OF INCREASING THE EFFICIENCY OF ECOTOURISM IN UZBEKISTAN

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<b>Received:</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2021 <b>Accepted:</b> 14 <sup>th</sup> April 2021 <b>Published:</b> 30 <sup>th</sup> April 2021	This article presents the problems in the development of tourism and directions for improving their efficiency, as well as future solutions, taking into account the environmental situation in Uzbekistan. Suggestions and recommendations for the development of ecotourism in Uzbekistan are also outlined.
<b>Keywords:</b> Ecotourism, natural resource, SWOT analysis, landscape, environmental education.	

## INTRODUCTION.

One of the issues recognized by the world community is to achieve sustainable development of all sectors of the economy locally, regionally and globally, in particular, eco-tourism, which is one of the leading sectors in the service sector.

In particular, in order to accelerate the development of ecotourism in Uzbekistan in the context of the pandemic, amendments and additions were made to the Land Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Law "On Forests" and the Law "On Protected Natural Areas". The draft law reconsiders the issues of efficient and rational use of forest lands and the lease of land plots by the State Committee for Forestry to legal entities and individuals on the basis of investment agreements or public-private partnerships. As a result, the process of establishing recreational zones on the territory of the forest fund will be simplified, and new opportunities for the development of ecotourism will appear<sup>1</sup>.

The main factors that show the attractiveness of Uzbekistan are its exotic nature, rich landscape, diversity of flora and fauna. Samarkand, Kashkadarya, Surkhandarya, Jizzakh, Fergana and Tashkent regions are rich in monuments and serve as key centers for the development of mass ecotourism. This shows that the ecotourism potential of Uzbekistan, especially ecotourism resources, is a great opportunity for the development of the industry. One of the most lucrative and profitable sectors of the economy is tourism, and from 2019 to the present, tourism has also suffered the most from the coronavirus pandemic that has shaken the world. With the development of measures to mitigate the effects of the pandemic for the coming periods, the importance of developing adventure, ecological, rural tourism is high. In recent years, the number of tourists visiting the tourist areas of the world has increased, compared to historical and religious tourist sites, where there are beautiful nature sites, mountain slopes, seashores, adventure sites, festivals where various games are organized. This, in turn, indicates that ecotourism is the most lucrative type of tourism.

## LITERATURE REVIEW.

The development of eco-tourism combines nature, culture and the human factor, maintains the balance of the environment, serves to save and protect natural resources of the local population. The environmental situation sometimes occurs in relation to a factor or component. Russian scientists such as Yu.V.Novikov, R.O. Beknazov [2], A.G.Bannikov, A.K. Rustamov [3], recommend not to separate any ecosystem with an ecological situation, not to conclude that the ecological situation is a violation of the natural ecological environment. They point out that the interpretation of the ecological situation as a violation of the natural complex leads to unrest among the population, the spread of various misinformation, and these cases eventually lead to mass protests. According to the well-known scientist M.Hoshimov, "Ecotourism connects man with the natural environment, cultivates a love for nature, encourages the protection of nature." [4]. Economist A.Rafikov [5] studied the formation of the ecological situation in Uzbekistan in relation to one factor or one resource. According to well-known scientists K.Abirkulov, A. Khojimatov and A. Rafikov[6], the ecological situation in most large areas of Uzbekistan is caused by pollution of water resources. Ecotourism is an integral part of natural tourism infrastructure, it is not just an idea, but a specific type of tourism in general, its impact on the environment can be different (negative, neutral and positive). The concept of ecotourism is widely used in modern contemporary activities of nature reserves and nature parks. The reason for the rapid growth

<sup>1</sup> <https://uzbektourism.uz/uz/newnews/view?id=1111>

of this type of tourism in the world is not only the deterioration of the environment, but also the growing use of popular resorts - mountain resorts, warm seashores, plains and forests.

Ecotourism, like any other type of tourism, must be environmentally sustainable, entertaining tourists and bringing income to the local population. The goal of ecotourism is to use nature wisely in the direction of tourism to ensure the ecological security and sustainable development of present and future generations.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.**

Improving the efficiency of ecotourism, taking into account the ecological situation in developed countries, strategies for the development of the economy of the ecotourism industry, the main indicators of the ecotourism economy and the development of measures on environmental conditions have been studied by our scientists. And all this has been studied in the process of developing conclusions and proposals for the further development of the ecotourism economy, overcoming the crisis and the widespread use of advanced technologies in ecotourism. In doing so, the methods and results of scientific and applied research aimed at describing the specific features of the field of ecotourism were used.

### **ANALYSIS AND RESULTS.**

Uzbekistan is also one of the leading countries in Central Asia in terms of tourism potential, and among the top 10-15 countries in the world. There are more than four thousand architectural, historical and natural monuments of different periods in the territory of the republic. One of the main factors distinguishing the attractiveness of the tourist area is the exotic nature of Uzbekistan, rich landscape, diversity of flora and fauna. The climatic conditions of Uzbekistan play an important role in the development of recreation and ecotourism. Today, protected natural areas are a major link in eco-tourism. International tourists visiting our country are still interested in the remains of the Aral Sea, the banks of the Lower Amudarya, ancient forms and paintings in our mountains, millennial trees and recreational springs and waterfalls. Samarkand, Kashkadarya, Surkhandarya, Jizzakh, Fergana and Tashkent regions of the country are rich in natural monuments and can be centers of mass ecotourism. These regions are home to magnificent caves, karsts, waterfalls and ravines, springs, ravines and streams, ravines, rocky terrain, exposed deposits and other magnificent natural monuments.

The development of ecotourism in Uzbekistan has the following socio-economic significance:

- creation of additional jobs for the local population in other joint industries, such as the tourism industry;
- an increase in income sectors of the local economy (hotel industry, catering, transport complexes, souvenir production, national economy, etc.);
- stimulating currency exchange;
- additional investment and increased demand for manufactured products will lead to the development of agriculture and food industry;
- improvement of living conditions, utilities and transport services;
- investment in the rational use of tourist resources (places of tourist interest), in turn, in protected areas;
- intensive agriculture through the demand for natural conservation of land;
- development of global communication;
- incentives aimed at preserving the local natural and cultural heritage due to the constant attention of the tourist community;
- the development of recreational complexes, which in turn creates enormous conditions for recreation of the local population.

As a result of the development of ecotourism in Uzbekistan, it is planned to increase the potential of our country at the domestic and foreign levels, as well as in the economic sphere. The task before us is to develop and apply the theoretical foundations in this area of tourism. In particular, "The concept of eco-tourism development in Uzbekistan" emphasizes the importance of the following tasks for the development of eco-tourism in the country:

- development of special laws for the formation of the ecotourism industry and the creation of their legal mechanism;
- development of theoretical bases of ecotourism science, education and practice;
- raising the ecological awareness and culture of the population through ecotourism;
- establishment of education and upbringing in the field of ecotourism;
- training and retraining of ecotourism specialists;
- comprehensive assessment of ecotourism sites and maintenance of their cadastre;
- monitoring and forecasting of ecotourism;
- zoning of national state territories on ecotourism;
- development of tactical plans and strategic programs and measures of ecotourism of states and the international community;
- conservation of biodiversity.

Through the following SWOT analysis, we can see the strengths and weaknesses of the ecotourism sector in Uzbekistan, the level of opportunities, as well as ways to increase it by fully understanding the obstacles to the development of this sector.

## SWOT analysis of ecotourism development in Uzbekistan

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p><b>This type of tourism is ecologically clean and very close to nature, which is one of the current issues;</b>  <b>Ecotourism has the health properties of the human body;</b>  <b>Located in the center and close to rich countries like Russia, China, India; Richness of ecotourism resources;</b>  <b>The climate is temperate;</b>  <b>Having a hospitable people;</b>  <b>Support of information centers by the administration, strong international relations;</b>  <b>Existence of specially protected areas in Uzbekistan;</b>  <b>Formation of tourist neighborhoods, villages and auls;</b>  <b>Support for tourism by local and regional leaders.</b>  <b>The population's confidence in the future of tourism.</b></p>	<p>This type of tourism is ecologically clean and very close to nature, which is one of the current issues;  Ecotourism has the health properties of the human body;  Located in the center and close to rich countries like Russia, China, India; Richness of ecotourism resources;  The climate is temperate;  Having a hospitable people;  Support of information centers by the administration, strong international relations;  Existence of specially protected areas in Uzbekistan;  Formation of tourist neighborhoods, villages and auls;  Support for tourism by local and regional leaders.  The population's confidence in the future of tourism.</p>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p><b>The use of natural resources of the region;</b>  <b>Liaising with travel agencies in Russia, CIS and other countries;</b>  <b>Attracting small business and entrepreneurial investment in the tourism industry;</b>  <b>Entering new markets or market segments (new types).</b>  <b>Expansion of the production system (expansion of the service system).</b>  <b>Possibility to form an organization responsible for the formation of the infrastructure, taking full responsibility;</b>  <b>The formation of a body that approaches tourism from a professional point of view;</b>  <b>Availability of hospitality and high quality service to visitors;</b>  <b>Cooperation of the local population with the management and tourism officials;</b></p>	<p>So far, there are no clear tourist routes and the existing ones are rarely advertised;  That the climate of the region is strongly dependent on natural changes;  Changes in customer demand and taste. Political and economic turmoil in neighboring countries.  The demographic situation is not positive.  Changes in exchange rates are not positive.  Entering a highly competitive market.  Lack of aesthetic and ecological literacy of tourists and visitors leads to severe pollution of the environment, threats to life and health of the local population (fires, water pollution, waste, etc.).</p>

As the above SWOT analysis shows, the ecotourism potential of our country is high, but it is necessary to use these opportunities wisely and eliminate the existing shortcomings, pay special attention to ecotourism potential areas of the country and plan to develop ecotourism in these regions.

Of course, there are specific problems and challenges in this area, including:

- non-compliance of infrastructure with the required level;
- lack of highly qualified specialists in the field of ecotourism;
- lack of development of tourist routes to the main ecotourism resources in the country;
- in the development of ecotourism, the lack of education, advocacy and incentives for the employment of the local population in ecotourism sites;
- the lack of domestic advertising of domestic ecotourism and international ecotourism in the development of ecotourism, both in the domestic tourism market and in the foreign tourism market;
- low environmental awareness in humans.

There are many problems with the development of ecotourism in Uzbekistan, but most of it has the potential to be mastered, put in the right direction, and serious work is being done in this direction. Investments are being made in the training of qualified personnel (environmental guides, disseminators of information in this area, guides), the development of infrastructure. However, overcoming the problem of lack of complete information on tourism opportunities in certain regions of the country and in them is still a topical issue. Therefore, quality information and

environmental education deserve special attention. The promotion of eco-tourism in the media is undoubtedly of great importance for increasing and attracting interest in eco-tourism. At the same time, one of the most important aspects is to pay more attention to advertising. If the main tasks of advertising are understood as attracting buyers, ensuring the dissemination of this or that product and service, and disseminating information about someone or something, the importance of both is very convenient for the current situation of ecotourism promotion. It helps shape demand by engaging in the use of services. Provides the flow of information about the manufacturer and its products, and performs the function of advertising information. In the introduction of new products in the market, advertising coordinates the dissemination of knowledge in various areas of human activity, demonstrates its educational mission and instills in consumers specific practical skills. However, we need to register ecotourism sites in our nature reserves right now and start writing down their descriptions. Of course, catalogs of color images of natural landscapes, which are unique to nature reserves, have been developed. When we look at the international statistics on the development of ecotourism, both in domestic and international tourism, 70-80% of tourists are interested in the unique fauna of nature reserves, especially in the wild.

Today, the global nature of the ecological crisis worries humanity. At the root of the world's growing environmental problems is the declining power of nature's self-renewal, the depletion of its resources, and the pollution and poisoning of the environment. In this regard, it is very important to raise the ecological culture of the population, to treat the environment wisely, to preserve the blessings of nature for future generations. After all, environmental education is important in ensuring the connection between nature and society and maintaining natural stability. Experience shows that it is impossible to develop ecotourism in the country without the formation of ecological knowledge in people. First of all, it is necessary to raise awareness that ecotourism is beneficial not only to the economy but also to the local population, as well as that ecotourism is the most sensible way to preserve nature. The people living in the area should be involved in this field, that is, they should work as specialists. In order to develop ecotourism, citizens need to form an ecological culture, education. At the same time, it is necessary to create and improve information resources that can provide complete information about ecotourism and related organizations.

In order to organize ecotourism in the field, we consider it expedient to take into account the following factors that affect ecotourism:

- use of environmentally friendly detergents;
- water and energy saving;
- ensuring that the internal order is consistent with the local structure;
- use of environmentally friendly building materials;
- direct supply of household, local products;
- increase in seasonal food production;
- environmentally friendly proposals should be made.

It is also important to take into account the impact of environmental factors in the design of hotels, camping and sports facilities, the organization of rental of bicycles and horses, the construction of a golf course, the construction of bus stations in remote areas, and taking into account the environment when planning the construction and repair of public transport roads outside the city. In the development of this sector, the provision of food services to tourists brings income not only from other regions, but also from quality food products grown by the local population, ie subsidiary farms (vegetables grown on vacant land in residential areas).

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.**

As a result of the research, we offer the following for the development of ecotourism in the country:

1. Given the lack of highly qualified specialists in the field of ecotourism in our country, who can meet the world standards, it is necessary to send young professionals to countries with developed ecotourism for training and exchange of experience.
2. It is necessary to develop and implement large-scale, short-term and long-term projects and business plans based on science and economics in accordance with international standards and requirements. At the same time, it is important to pay attention to the degree to which the business plan is in harmony with nature and does not harm the environment (on the basis of soft loans).
3. It is necessary to carry out propaganda work in the world ecotourism market with the help of booklets, tourist atlases and maps about the historical monuments, beautiful and unique nature, landscape, flora and fauna of our country.
4. It is necessary to create new ecotourism programs, routes and maps of the regions of Uzbekistan. It is necessary to increase the number of information resources that can provide a complete picture of ecotourism and related organizations.
5. Due to measures in the field of organization, protection and use of protected natural areas, joint activities of local authorities, as well as specially authorized state bodies, public organizations should form a single system of interconnection of protected natural areas of the republic.
6. Use of solar energy as an alternative to electricity;
7. It is necessary to develop infrastructure (roads, transport, eco-houses);
8. Conducting environmental education classes in schools;
9. It is necessary to create a website of ecological zones and improve the existing web pages.

In conclusion, a correctly- and well-established ecotourism network can yield positive results in the field of environmental protection and biodiversity conservation and the rational use of natural resources.

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