

Directions of Ecotourism Organization in Uzbekistan

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Abstract. This article examines the directions of ecotourism development in the Republic of Uzbekistan, which has a significant natural and cultural potential. The current state of ecotourism infrastructure is analysed and key problems that hinder its effective functioning are identified. As a result of the study, the existing ecotourism sites are systematized by areas of activity, and recommendations are proposed for improving the management and development of ecotourism in the country. Particular attention is paid to the issues of rational use of natural resources, enhancing the quality of services and attracting investment on the basis of public-private partnership. The findings of the study emphasize the importance of an integrated approach to the organization of ecotourism, which contributes not only to the preservation of natural heritage, but also to the sustainable economic development of the regions.

Key Words: Ecotourism; Uzbekistan.

1 Introduction

Ecotourism plays an important role in preserving natural heritage and sustainable development, especially in the context of modern environmental challenges. Uzbekistan, with its rich and diverse natural potential, has significant opportunities for the development of ecotourism. However, despite the high level of ecotourism development in the country, a number of systemic problems remain unresolved that hinder its further progress.

An important task is the rational management of ecotourism development, aimed at increasing the efficiency of ecotourism services and minimizing the negative impact on the environment. Currently, insufficient attention is paid to the study of these issues in Uzbekistan, which requires a more detailed approach and the development of appropriate management and infrastructure solutions [1, 2]. Effective use of the rich and diverse ecotourism potential and opportunities of Uzbekistan is in many ways closely related to the rational management of ecotourism development. Management creates a favourable environment for organizing the activities of ecotourism companies, serves to increase the efficiency of ecotourism services and reduce the negative impact on nature.

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A necessary condition for the development of ecotourism is the presence of ecotourism potential, which consists of natural-ecological components, landscapes, objects of economic activity, which are distinguished by their uniqueness, ecological attractiveness, treatment-health properties, convenience for the development of ecological tourism. Ecotourism potential is used with the help of appropriate material and technical base - infrastructure, main funds. It will be established during the development of the relevant areas for ecotourism purposes. The ecotourism system consists of interconnected subsystems - nature and cultural complexes, engineering structures, service personnel, vacationers and management bodies.

The peculiarity of recreation, including ecotourism, is that the services provided in it are carried out in areas where recreation resources are available, that is, resources are consumed there. In other words, the provision of ecotourism services is carried out in recreation areas, which are considered as a kind of real estate, where the demands and needs of vacationers are met. This situation is an extremely important factor in managing the development of ecotourism, and it requires comprehensive consideration of the socio-demographic, economic, age, national, and other characteristics and needs of recreationists.

The purpose of this article is to study the directions of ecotourism development in Uzbekistan with an emphasis on the systematization of existing ecotourism sites and the analysis of the problems faced by this sector.

2 Literature Review

Ecotourism, as a special type of tourism activity, has received considerable attention in the scientific literature due to its contribution to the conservation of natural resources and sustainable development of regions. In the context of global environmental challenges, ecotourism is considered an important tool that not only supports biological diversity, but also ensures the economic development of local communities through responsible tourism.

Research shows that the successful development of ecotourism requires an integrated approach, including effective management of natural resources, the creation of the necessary infrastructure, and the involvement of local people in the process of planning and implementing ecotourism programs. Among Uzbek economists conducting scientific research in the field of tourism are Tukhliev, Tukhliev, Mukhammedov, Pardaev, Alieva, Aslanova, Hoshimov, Hamidov, Alimova, Eshtaev, Safarov, Khaitbaev, Ahtamova [3-9].

For example, the works by Tukhliev, Mukhammedov, Pardaev, Aliyeva and other Uzbek scientists are devoted to the issues of management and organization of tourism in the context of economic liberalization and consider various aspects of the use of natural resources for tourism purposes.

The literature also notes the importance of a systems approach to the development of ecotourism, which includes taking into account the socio-demographic, economic and cultural characteristics of vacationers. For example, Alimova and Eshtayev emphasize the need to create an infrastructure that meets the needs of tourists, which requires investment and development at the level of public and private partnership.

Despite significant interest in the topic of ecotourism, many aspects of its development in Uzbekistan remain insufficiently studied. In particular, there is a limited number of studies devoted to the specifics of organizing ecotourism in the context of the rich natural and cultural heritage of the country. The works of Safarov, Askarov, Akhtamova et al. contribute to the study of individual aspects of ecotourism, but a systemic analysis and the development of specific recommendations for its development require further research.

3 Analysis

The results of the research show that 1 trillion soums have been allocated from the Republic's budget to improve tourism infrastructure, one of the main types of which is ecological tourism. 135.1 billion soums were directed to the development of tourism infrastructure of Samarkand region; organization of restoration and conservation, beautification works of 318 objects of cultural heritage worth 26 billion soums; improvement of the condition of the roads leading to 8 domestic and pilgrimage tourism objects worth 5.9 billion soums; improvement of drinking water, sewerage and other engineering communication networks in 8 objects worth 54.4 billion soums; construction, reconstruction, expansion and modernization of tourism and related infrastructures will be carried out in 9 objects worth 9 billion soums. Financial support for the sector is systematically organized, paying particular attention to the development of ecological tourism. In this regard, together with relevant organizations and industry experts, project estimate documents are being developed for the future perspective of ecotourism.

According to the results of the research, it is appropriate to study ecological tourism by dividing it into the following areas of activity:

1. The organization of trips for the purpose of studying natural history mainly creates an opportunity for tourists to go on a trip for nature study, research, scientific and cultural purposes. These types of tours include tours aimed at learning about local people's culture and nature, and are usually organized in the area's national parks and nature reserves [3].

2. Tourists will have the opportunity to directly observe the processes occurring in the environment during field experiments and analyses. In this case, observing the way of life of rare animals and studying them arouses great interest in ecotourists. This type of tourism includes ecological expeditions abroad, trips where students go to remote areas to study the way plants and animals live in nature.

3. Recreational and adventure travel involves the process of active recreation among tourists, usually in the midst of wild nature. The purpose of this type of travel is to give tourists new sensations, improve their physical condition, and even achieve certain sports results. In this case, ecotourists can be cited rock climbing, mountain and hiking tourism, horse sports, diving, paragliding, ski tourism. Some of them are extreme tourism types due to the high risk to life. Nevertheless, adventure tourism is one of the most common types of ecotourism today.

4. In travel tourism to nature reserves, wonderful animals and exotic plants in the reserves create opportunities for many tourists to remember a lifetime of emotions. Usually, tour companies provide tourists with shows, theatre performances, and similar entertainment activities when organizing tours to nature reserves.

5. Traveling to natural wonders for the purpose of pilgrimage, in the process of ecotourism, visiting natural wonders that amaze people, on the one hand, people visit and feel spiritual lightness, on the other hand, going to the mountains and hills to relax, enjoy the nature of the environment, and get rid of various diseases. In addition, as a result of consumption of healing mineral waters that have erupted from the bosom of nature, people are cured. The most important thing is that people visit and rest in the heart of nature, that is, travelling and pilgrimage. Today, examples of such ecotourism sites include Hazrati Davud cave, Nurota Lake hiking trail, Ibrahim Ota spring, etc.

Based on the above, in the research work, according to the international and republican experience, ecotourism activity directions and existing ecotourism objects in them were systematized on the example of Samarkand region (Table 1).

Table 1. The main directions of ecotourism in Samarkand region according to the activity content.

Key directions of ecotourism	Content and nature of ecotourism services	Existing ecotourism facilities in Samarkand region
Natural history field trips	Ecotourists travel to nature for study, research, scientific and cultural purposes. Examples of these types of tours include tours that focus on the study of local people's culture and nature, and are usually organized in national parks and reserves	Afrosyab Open Air historical site, Takhta Karacha in Urgut district of Samarkand region, Amir Timur road ecotourism site, Konigil House, National Pottery Workshop
Travels for scientific purposes	In this case, tourists will have the opportunity to directly observe the processes taking place in the environment in field experiments and analyses. For example, observing the lifestyle of rare animals and studying them arouses great interest among tourists. This type of tourism can include ecological expeditions abroad	Karnab Chol order, Japanese garden, Amonkoton state order, Koshrabot order
Travel for recreational and adventure purposes	In this type of tourism, tourists are usually engaged in active recreation in the bosom of wild nature. The purpose of this type of travel is to give tourists sensations that they have not experienced before, to improve their physical condition and even to achieve certain sports results	Bugishamol Garden, Mironkul ecotourism area, Fozilman in Koshrabot district
Travel to nature reserves	Amazing animals and exotic plants in the reserves attract many tourists. Usually, tour companies organize tours to nature reserves and also provide tourists with shows, theater performances, and similar entertainment activities	Zarafshan State Reserve, Dargom Forestry, Jomboy Forestry, Kattakurgan Forestry

Source: [5].

It is possible to propose the following effective directions for organizing the development of ecotourism in Uzbekistan:

Firstly, it was considered appropriate to carry out the following activities in the direction of finding and discovering new objects and types of ecotourism:

- identification of places rich in natural wonders that are rarely visited by people;
- turning famous historical places into ecotourism objects. For example, Takhta Karacha Divan, called Amir Temur road, etc.;
- organization of regions rich in natural wonders, where people can admire, relax and visit.

Secondly, it is an important task to develop ecotourism objects that create conditions for tourists to rest, relax, and enjoy nature in a conceptual direction. In this way, they will be able to achieve the goal of ecotourism tourism. For example, in the Zarafshan nature reserve in the Samarkand region, the client creates an opportunity for tourists to enjoy the natural scenery, and in the Qarnab desert ecoregion, it will be possible to watch desert deer, gazelles and other desert animals. Also, in the cave of Hazrati Davud, visitors have the opportunity to achieve spiritual purification while watching the mountain scenery.

Thirdly, for the purpose of financial support of ecotourism in the Republic, in the direction of increasing the introduction of domestic and foreign investors into the sector, first of all, it is appropriate to attract private investors depending on the destination of ecotourism objects and to build new service facilities on the basis of public-private partnership. Investors create the opportunity and conditions for high income based on the establishment of such ecotourism facilities. For example, on the basis of inviting investors from the Republic of

Turkey to the Takhta Karacha eco-tourism resort located in the region, they will be able to earn income from this area (construction of the Takhta Karacha Cable Car), and the regional product will increase.

Fourthly, to attract more ecotourists for ecotourism facilities in the direction of paying special attention to ecotourism facilities for higher income based on quality service, higher income from the sector is achieved. This requires paying attention to the following in the field [6]:

- creating their scientifically based history, involving leading specialists, historians, ethnographers in the field;
- achieving high-quality service based on attracting experienced guides, guide-interpreters to the field and providing them with necessary information;
- creation of the most important conditions necessary for ecotourists (toilets, hotel, prayer room, ablution room, eating places);
- development of "high-quality ecotourism service" criteria that ensure quality service.

Fifth, in the direction of high-level organization of service based on the formation and development of ecotourism infrastructure objects, first of all, it will be appropriate to form the following infrastructure objects in the direction of service provision of the ecotourism object.

The most important thing is to establish transport infrastructure and create hotel infrastructure for ecotourists to sleep and rest.

Sixth, in the direction of further strengthening of scientific and research work on the development of ecotourism services, it is considered appropriate to involve experts and scientists in the field of in-depth research of the field, to develop ecotourism, and to find solutions to the existing problems in this regard. In this, first of all, the system of increasing the number of scientific works of young scientists conducting scientific research in the field of ecotourism, as well as putting into practice the scientific opinions, suggestions and practical recommendations given by their research results will be established.

4 Conclusion

With increasing attention to environmental protection and sustainable development, ecotourism is becoming an integral part of the tourism industry contributing to the preservation of natural and cultural heritage, as well as ensuring economic growth in the regions. The study is aimed at identifying key areas for the development of ecotourism in Uzbekistan, as well as systematizing the existing ecotourism sites in the country.

The results of the study show that, despite the high potential for the development of ecotourism, there are a number of problems that need to be addressed, including the need to modernize infrastructure, improve the quality of services provided and attract investment. Particular attention should be paid to the rational management of natural resources and the creation of conditions for the sustainable development of ecotourism based on public-private partnerships.

Thus, the development of ecotourism in Uzbekistan is an important area that requires an integrated approach that takes into account socio-economic and environmental aspects.

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