

IMPACT OF SUSTAINABLE ECOTURISM STRATEGIES ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL SITUATION OF FERGANA REGION

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Abstract: *This article analyzes the impact of sustainable ecotourism strategies on the socio-economic development and ecological state of the Fergana region. The study examines the role of ecotourism in increasing employment, creating additional sources of income for the local economy, preserving cultural heritage, and reducing the negative impact on the environment. The natural and cultural resources of the Fergana region, existing opportunities for ecotourism, as well as existing problems and ways to eliminate them, are highlighted. As a strategic approach, directions for ensuring the sustainable development of ecotourism through environmental education, infrastructure development, and the involvement of the local population are considered. The scientific analysis and practical recommendations presented in this work can serve the development of ecotourism in the Fergana region.*

Key words: *Sustainable ecotourism, Fergana region, socio-economic development, ecological situation, tourism strategy, local population, natural resources, environmental protection, infrastructure, environmental education.*

INTRODUCTION

The Fergana region is distinguished by its rich nature, historical and cultural heritage, as well as ecological resources. The development of ecotourism in this region will allow not only to increase tourism, but also to ensure the ecological sustainability of the region, create new jobs for the local community, as well as contribute to the protection and development of nature.

Today, the importance of ecological and sustainable tourism is increasing on a global scale. In particular, environmentally friendly and environmentally friendly tourism activities create great opportunities not only for environmental protection but also for economic development. Despite the fact that the Fergana region has its own tourist potential and many natural and cultural monuments, it is still insufficiently developed in the field of ecotourism. Therefore, this topic is relevant, and its development will play an important role in transforming the region into a tourist center, as well as in solving environmental problems.

In particular, the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated October 3, 2019 No. 843 “On Measures for the Further Development of the Tourist Potential of the Fergana Region” defines as one of the strategic goals “further development of the tourist potential of the Fergana region and increasing the efficiency of its use, creating favorable conditions for attracting foreign and local tourists to the region, ensuring the accelerated development of modern infrastructure, expanding and improving the quality of tourism, hotel and transport services provided”³⁶.

The development of ecotourism, as well as increasing environmental knowledge and awareness, contributes to the formation of respect for the environment among local residents and tourists. Studying the natural landscape and resources of the region—mountains, rivers, forests, recreation areas, all opportunities related to ecotourism activities carried out in rural areas, existing problems and their solutions, as a result, it is possible to achieve sustainable and effective development of ecotourism.

Therefore, issues of ecotourism development in the Fergana region serve the current and future socio-economic development of the region, the preservation of ecological stability, increasing the incomes of the local population, and turning the region into a tourist center.

RESULT

Today, ecotourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the world economy. Experts note that the growth rate of this sector globally is around 20-30 percent annually. Before the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, the ecotourism industry generated nearly US\$1 billion in revenue per day.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, special attention is paid to the development of the tourism sector, in particular, sustainable and environmentally oriented tourism, which is considered as one of the factors of diversification of the national economy and full realization of regional potential.

The term “ecotourism” was proposed in 1983 by Mexican economist and ecologist Hector Ceballos-Laskurein, according to whose definition, ecotourism is a category of tourists traveling to relatively undisturbed or unpolluted areas with unique natural conditions. Their focus is on objects worth studying and enjoying, such as landscapes, wild plants and animals, as well as the cultural characteristics of these areas [2].

Each region of Uzbekistan has its own unique tourism potential, including the Fergana region, which is one of the most picturesque and large centers of the country with high tourism potential. Currently, large-scale work is being carried out to further develop the tourism potential of the region [3].

The current stage of globalization is characterized by the growing importance of tourism and its impact on the global and national economies. It is characterized that tourism satisfies the specific needs of a person, such as restoring health and increasing

³⁶ Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated October 3, 2019 No. 843 “On Measures for the Further Development of the Tourist Potential of the Fergana Region”

labor productivity, and this industry is supported not only by tourism enterprises, but also by other industries [1;4].

Discussion. In recent years, the concept of sustainable development has been widely implemented throughout the world, including in Uzbekistan. In particular, the development and implementation of sustainable strategies in the field of ecotourism plays an important role in improving the socio-economic and ecological situation of the Fergana region. Here, sustainable ecotourism serves not only as a basis for preserving natural resources, but also for improving the living standards of the local population and ensuring economic growth.

Ecotourism contributes to the creation of new jobs in the Fergana region. This will significantly increase revenues not only directly in the tourism sector, but also in handicrafts, agriculture, and small businesses.

Ecotourism increases the economic activity of villages and small towns in the region. The local population creates additional sources of income through traditional crafts, preparation of national dishes, and holding cultural events. This has a positive impact on social stability.

Along with the development of ecotourism, projects are being implemented for the use of environmentally friendly transport and energy sources. This will help improve air quality, as well as reduce water and soil pollution. Ecotourism not only helps to preserve the natural environment, but also significantly improves the social and economic life of local communities. The development of ecotourism in the Fergana region is an important factor in increasing the incomes of the local population, creating new jobs, and ensuring social stability.

As a result of the expansion of the ecotourism sector, new jobs will be created. This is reflected not only in the sphere of tourist services (hotels, guides, transport services), but also in the sphere of local crafts, agriculture, and small business. For example, by preparing national dishes for guests, producing and selling traditional handicrafts, the local population can contribute.

The development of ecotourism stimulates various sectors of the local economy. In particular, in crafts, local artisans earn income by producing national clothing, carpets, ceramics, and other traditional items. These products are well-sold on tourist routes and, by enriching the local economy, lead to the provision of local agricultural products to ecotourists in agriculture, opening additional markets for farmers and gardeners. The activities of hotels, restaurants, transport and tour operators will expand, which will accelerate economic growth.

Through ecotourism, the local population pays great attention to the preservation and promotion of their cultural traditions. Cultural heritage, national costumes, cuisine, traditions, and festivals are valued as a tourist resource. This increases social solidarity and self-confidence among the local population. Also, activities in the field of ecotourism

create new opportunities for young people, encouraging them to stay in their region and continue their work. This helps maintain social balance.

Ecotourism is a type of tourism aimed at environmental protection, sustainable use of natural and cultural resources. The development of ecotourism in the Fergana region is of great importance not only in economic and social, but also in ecological terms. Ecotourism strategies are one of the main tools for protecting the natural resources, rich biodiversity, and landscapes of this region.

Ecotourism creates a financial and spiritual basis for the protection of natural areas. Part of the income from tourism is spent on the preservation of natural parks, national reserves, and other protected areas.

This reduces deforestation and the destruction of wildlife habitats. Through ecotourism activity, attention is paid to the preservation of biodiversity. In the Fergana Valley and mountainous areas, there are rare plant and animal species, for which special protection regimes are developed. This ensures the stability of natural ecosystems. The use of environmentally friendly vehicles and low-pollution energy sources in ecotourism is encouraged. This reduces air pollution, as well as water and soil contamination with harmful substances. With the arrival of a large number of tourists in natural areas, the species of plants and animals living there may be harmed, and the landscape may be damaged.

In the Fergana region, measures are being taken to expand and protect national parks and nature reserves. Environmental monitoring will be carried out in these areas, and rules will be introduced for tourists.

Sustainable ecotourism is a form of tourism that aims to develop natural and cultural resources while preserving them for future generations. Sustainable ecotourism strategies are a set of comprehensive measures aimed at environmental protection, improving the well-being of local communities, and ensuring economic growth. The following key elements are important for the implementation of sustainable ecotourism in the Fergana region. (1-table).

Main elements of sustainable ecotourism strategies and their goals

1-table

Item name	Purpose	Expected results
Conservation of natural resources	Conservation of nature	Conservation of biodiversity, environmental protection
Engaging local communities	Increasing social and economic interest	Creation of jobs, preservation of culture
Sustainable infrastructure	Resource conservation and pollution reduction	Minimize environmental damage
Educational and information campaigns	Raising environmental and social awareness	Preparation for stability in society

Legislative and political support	Creating an environment for competitive and sustainable development	Increase in investments, legality of activity
Monitoring and evaluation	Increasing the effectiveness of strategies	Identify problems and find solutions

The first and most important task in ecotourism is the protection of natural resources. This includes the following measures:

- Creation and expansion of protected natural areas.
- Strengthening environmental monitoring and environmental control.
- Conservation of wild animals and rare plant species.
- Regulation of tourist access to natural areas, prevention of overload.

For the sustainable development of ecotourism, it is necessary to create environmentally friendly, energy- and resource-saving infrastructure:

- Use of renewable energy sources (solar, wind).
- Environmentally friendly vehicles.
- Waste and waste management systems.
- Effective and economical management of water resources.

To ensure the sustainability of ecotourism, constant monitoring systems and assessment mechanisms are necessary. Systematic analysis of the social, economic, and environmental impact of ecotourism projects. Identify problems and find quick solutions. Continuous improvement of strategies and measures.

Road, hotel, sanitary, and other service infrastructure necessary for sustainable ecotourism are still underdeveloped or insufficient. This reduces the comfort of tourists and hinders the development of tourism.

The region's natural and cultural resources, as well as the availability of state programs aimed at developing ecotourism, create great opportunities for attracting investments. In cooperation with the private sector, it is possible to improve the quality of infrastructure and services. The introduction of environmentally friendly vehicles, energy-saving technologies, and waste recycling contributes to sustainable development. At the same time, the range of tourism services can be expanded with the help of digital marketing and information technologies.

Expansion of educational programs for training qualified personnel in the field of ecotourism, training of the local population and youth will become an important factor in sustainable development. This will contribute to the development of high-quality service and tourism potential. Social stability can be ensured by increasing the interest of the local population in ecotourism projects, involving them in initiatives and decision-making processes. This serves the preservation of cultural heritage and the creation of new jobs.

State policies, legislation, and financial incentives that stimulate the ecotourism sector create a solid foundation for sustainable development.

Although there are serious problems in the development of sustainable ecotourism in the Fergana region, they can be overcome with the help of effective management and strategic approaches. Investments, education, the involvement of local communities, and innovation enhance the prospects of this sector. At the same time, the effective functioning of state policy and legislation has a great influence on the development of sustainable ecotourism.

Conclusion In conclusion, the development of ecotourism in the Fergana region serves not only environmental sustainability, but also economic growth and social well-being. A comprehensive approach and cooperation of all interested parties are necessary in this direction. Based on these conclusions, the following proposals are presented.

1. For the phased development of ecotourism infrastructure, it is necessary to attract local and foreign investments to create roads, ecological corridors, recreation areas, information centers, and accommodation infrastructure in the ecotourism areas of the region.

2. Establishment of a system for training and advanced training of specialists. It is necessary to create training centers for guides, ecologists, service personnel, and marketing specialists working in the field of ecotourism.

3. Active involvement of the local population. It is proposed to stimulate entrepreneurial initiatives in ecotourism among the population, create sustainable sources of income through handicrafts, agritourism, ecotourism, and the provision of services.

4. Strengthening propaganda and awareness-raising work. It is necessary to create a regional brand by participating in internet platforms, social networks, international exhibitions, and tourism fairs that highlight the ecotourism potential of the Fergana region.

5. Expansion of cooperation based on public-private partnership. In the development of ecotourism facilities, it is advisable to provide for close cooperation with the private sector, the introduction of tax and bureaucratic benefits for investors.

6. Strengthening the system of environmental standards and control. To conduct tourism activities without harming nature, it is necessary to introduce environmental audits, monitoring, and special regulations.

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