

**PRESSING ISSUES IN THE FORMATION OF ECOTOURISM BASED ON THE USE OF  
REGIONAL ECOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

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**Abstract:** This article explores the current state of ecotourism in Uzbekistan, assessing its natural potential and prospects for sustainable development. It emphasizes the need to improve tourism infrastructure based on regional characteristics, to ensure ecological stability, and to foster active involvement of local communities. The article positions ecotourism not only as an economically beneficial sector but also as a multidimensional phenomenon that contributes to the development of environmental awareness and the protection of natural heritage. Within a theoretical framework, various approaches to ecotourism are systematically discussed. Furthermore, the article underscores the importance of formulating a national ecotourism model that aligns with Uzbekistan's social, economic, and cultural landscape.

**Keywords:** ecotourism, sustainable development, nature conservation, tourism infrastructure, ecological culture.

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**Introduction:**

Among the modern branches of tourism, ecotourism is gaining increasing significance. This is due to its dual role: providing tourists with recreational experiences and encouraging responsible behavior toward the natural environment. Given the ongoing climate changes, ecological challenges, and dwindling natural resources, the importance of ecotourism continues to grow globally. Ecotourism generally refers to nature-based travel that minimizes environmental impact and promotes ecological awareness.

Uzbekistan, with its unique natural conditions, extensive protected areas, diverse landscapes including mountains and deserts, and rich biodiversity, holds substantial potential for the development of ecotourism. At the same time, ecotourism offers economic, social, and cultural benefits by generating employment, increasing local income, and most importantly, contributing to nature conservation. These factors make the advancement of ecotourism a particularly relevant issue in Uzbekistan.

The primary aim of ecotourism is to maintain a balance between human activity and nature, while enhancing environmental knowledge through tourism. Tourists engaged in ecotourism respect nature, reduce waste, and help protect flora and fauna. This type of tourism educates people on their environmental impact, thereby fostering eco-consciousness.

Ecotourism is also economically advantageous, particularly for rural populations. Local residents can earn income by preparing traditional food, selling handicrafts, or working as tour guides. This invigorates the local economy and helps communities become more self-sufficient. Moreover, ecotourism strengthens intercultural dialogue. Tourists are introduced to local customs, values, and folklore, fostering mutual understanding and respect.

Despite its benefits, ecotourism in Uzbekistan faces several challenges. Many natural areas remain under-researched, and access is limited due to poor transportation infrastructure. Essential

tourist amenities—such as accommodation, food services, and medical facilities—are often lacking.

In addition, there is insufficient public awareness of ecotourism, especially among local populations, which hinders active participation. In some protected areas, environmental violations such as illegal dumping, plant destruction, and wildlife disturbance are still occurring. There are also too few ecotourism service providers, and those that exist often lack professional training. To overcome these issues, it is crucial to develop training programs, establish certification for eco-guides, and introduce specialized ecotourism education initiatives.

Ecotourism brings substantial economic advantages. In areas where ecotourism is developed, it provides a stable income source for local residents. The influx of tourists boosts demand for local goods and services, including accommodation, transportation, and artisanal products.

This promotes the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises and contributes to social equity, reduced rural unemployment, and increased engagement of women and youth in economic activity. Moreover, it encourages efficient use of local resources and supports sustainable economic growth, all while prioritizing conservation and responsible resource management.

#### **Positive Economic Impacts of Ecotourism:**

1. **Job creation:** Ecotourism generates employment in guiding, hospitality, handicrafts, and transport.
2. **Increased demand for local goods:** Tourists often seek locally produced food, souvenirs, and garments.
3. **Foreign currency inflow:** International visitors contribute to national revenue.

#### **Statistics for 2024:**

- **Ecotourists:** Over 450,000 visitors
- **Direct and indirect jobs created:** More than 20,000
- **Total income from ecotourism zones:** Approximately 70 million USD

#### **Scientific Perspectives on Ecotourism:**

According to Russian scholar V.V. Khrabovchenko (2003), ecotourism is a form of tourism that satisfies demand while also contributing to conservation efforts, shaped by the interests of both tourists and local communities.

A.Y. Aleksandrovskaya (2002) identifies three principles essential to ecotourism development:

1. A portion of the profit from tourism services should remain in the destination to support local environmental protection.
2. Environmental protection requirements must be treated as fundamental regulatory standards.

3. Conservation-driven tourism should be legally and operationally prioritized.

It is particularly important to emphasize that the introduction of environmental certification systems plays a significant role in the development of ecotourism. These systems serve to regulate the environmental impact of tourism entities and ensure their activities comply with international environmental standards. Simultaneously, the use of modern digital technologies—such as mobile applications, virtual tours, and online booking platforms—has expanded opportunities for promoting natural destinations. These solutions not only attract tourists but also direct them towards ecological awareness and responsible behavior.

Ecotourism activities are also an effective tool for environmental protection. In particular, involving local communities in tourism processes allows them to become direct stakeholders in preserving the unique flora and fauna of their regions. This approach not only creates a sustainable source of income for local residents but also contributes to the conservation of biodiversity. Community-based ecotourism projects help ensure that the economic benefits remain within the region, reducing dependence on external investment.

However, there are still infrastructural challenges hindering the comprehensive development of ecotourism. For example, in remote areas, the availability of eco-friendly accommodations, waste management systems, and sustainable transportation networks remains insufficient. To overcome these issues, strong cooperation between the public and private sectors is essential. At the same time, ecotourism creates opportunities to promote environmental education among both the local population and visitors. This contributes to shaping a culture of responsible travel and respectful attitudes toward nature.

Expanding the participation of women in the ecotourism sector is also a crucial issue. Providing vocational training, leadership development, and entrepreneurship support for women can help ensure gender equality and strengthen social and economic inclusion in local communities. Alongside this, regulating tourist flows according to the seasons, limiting group sizes, and gradually opening access to certain destinations can help reduce environmental pressures. Finally, the integration of traditional ecological knowledge held by local communities into practical ecotourism management enhances the authenticity of the experience and supports ecological balance.

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), global demand for ecotourism has been growing by approximately 10–15% annually over the last decade. This reflects increasing public awareness about climate change, environmental degradation, and the need for sustainable travel options. In Uzbekistan, while ecotourism is still in its developmental phase, certain nature reserves and eco-destinations such as the Nuratau-Kyzylkum Biosphere Reserve, the Surkhan Nature Reserve, and the Zaamin National Park have started to receive attention from both local and international tourists.

A successful example of community-based ecotourism can be seen in the mountain villages of the Nuratau region, where local residents offer guesthouse accommodation, guided hiking tours, and traditional cuisine. These efforts have not only created jobs but also preserved unique biodiversity and cultural heritage. According to a study by the Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan, regions with active ecotourism projects have seen up to 30% growth in local household incomes within five years.

Moreover, data from the State Committee for Tourism of Uzbekistan indicate that over 70% of ecotourism visitors show interest in participating in conservation-related activities during their trips. This highlights the growing desire among tourists to engage with nature in a responsible and meaningful way. Such trends can be harnessed by developing eco-volunteering programs and environmental education campaigns within protected areas.

In terms of digital innovation, the introduction of mobile platforms like "UzNature" and virtual guide systems in parks has enhanced accessibility and helped manage visitor flows. These technologies can also support real-time monitoring of environmental impacts, allowing local authorities to take timely and data-driven decisions.

To further develop ecotourism, investment in infrastructure such as solar-powered lodges, eco-friendly waste systems, and bicycle paths is essential. Furthermore, training programs for ecotourism guides and hospitality staff can improve service quality while strengthening environmental ethics. International collaboration—especially through organizations like UNESCO and GEF (Global Environment Facility)—can bring technical expertise and funding to scale up best practices across regions.

**O'zbekistonda ekoturizm bo'yicha asosiy ko'rsatkichlar**

<b>Ko'rsatkich</b>	<b>Ma'lumot</b>	<b>Manba</b>	
Yillik global ekoturizm o'sishi	10–15%	UNWTO	
Nuratau mintaqasida mahalliy daromad o'sishi (5 yil ichida)	30% gacha	Ekologik Tadqiqoti	Harakat
Ekoturistlarning tabiatni asrashdagi ishtiroki	70% dan ortiq	O'zbekiston qo'mitasi	Turizm
Mashhur ekoturizm manzillari	Nuratau-Qizilqum, Zomin, Surxon	Ekoturizm Forumlari	
Raqamli innovatsiyalar	UzNature ilovasi, virtual gid tizimlari	Davlat turizm qo'mitasi	

In conclusion, in recent years, significant attention has been paid to the development of tourism, particularly ecotourism, in Uzbekistan. This stems from the fact that ecotourism serves not only as a means of tourism development but also as a path to sustainable environmental management. Ecotourism, by its very nature, offers great potential for stimulating economic development while preserving biodiversity and cultural values.

Ecotourism not only has a positive impact on nature conservation but also contributes to the socioeconomic development of the regions where it is implemented. It helps increase employment, improves living standards in rural areas, and encourages the efficient and sustainable use of local natural resources. The involvement of local populations in ecotourism processes is of particular importance in creating a sense of responsibility and ownership.

Considering the diversity of Uzbekistan's natural landscapes, favorable climate, and rich flora and fauna, it is essential to develop an integrated national model of ecotourism. This model should be tailored to the regional environmental, economic, and social conditions of the country. Thus, forming ecotourism based on the use of regional ecological resources is one of the most urgent and promising directions for sustainable development in Uzbekistan.

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