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ECOLOGICAL TOURISM: FEATURES AND PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada Tojikiston Respublikasida ekoturizmni rivojlantirish xususiyatlari va muammolari ko'rib chiqiladi. Bugungi kunda Tojikistonning tog'li hududlari boy va xilma-xil ekoturizm resurslari tufayli Markaziy Osiyoning eng istiqbolli mintaqalari qatoriga kiradi. Biroq Tojikistonning tog'li hududlarida turizm infratuzilmasining hozirgi holati, jumladan, zaif moddiy-texnika bazasi (ularning 80 foizi rekonstruksiyaga muhtoj), xizmat ko'rsatish darajasining pastligi, barqaror sanoatning yo'qligi, yodgorliklar, yodgorliklar va tabiiy, tarixiy va madaniy ahamiyatga ega bo'lgan boshqa ob'ektlar ustidan nazoratning yo'qligi tojikiston sanoatining global bozorini butunlay noaniq qilib qo'ygan. Tojikiston Respublikasida ekoturizm eng istiqbolli turizm sohalaridan biri hisoblanadi. Noyob iqlim va tabiiy sharoit, yuqori bioxilma-xillik, muhim muhofaza etiladigan hududlar (shu jumladan, 20 dan ortiq qo'riqxonalar va milliy bog'lar) mavjudligi xalqaro barqarorlik standartlariga javob beradigan ekoturizmni rivojlantirish uchun zamin yaratadi. Bunga misol qilib YuNESKOning Butunjahon merosi ro'yxatiga kiritilgan Tojikiston milliy bog'i va yuqori darajada saqlanib qolgan ekotizimlari va antropogen ta'sirining past darajasi bilan faxrlanadigan Pomir tog'larini keltirish mumkin.

Kalit so'zlar: ekologik muammolar, turizm, ekoturizm, Tojikiston, rekreatsiya, barqaror rivojlanish.

Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются особенности и проблемы развития экологического туризма в Республике Таджикиста. Сегодня горные районы Таджикистана, благодаря богатству и разнообразию ресурсов экотуризма, считаются одними из самых перспективных регионов Центральной Азии. Однако современное состояние туристической инфраструктуры в горных регионах Таджикистана, в том числе слабая материально-техническая база, 80 процентов которой нуждается в реконструкции, низкий уровень сервиса, отсутствие интересной отрасли, отсутствие надзора за памятниками, монументами и другими местами, представляющими природный, историко-культурный интерес и т. д., привели к тому, что таджикская туристическая отрасль совершенно неконкурентоспособна на мировом рынке. Экологический туризм в Республике Таджикистан представляет собой одно из наиболее перспективных направлений туристической деятельности. Уникальные климатические и природные условия, высокое биологическое разнообразие, наличие значительных охраняемых территорий (в том числе более 20 заповедников и национальных парков) формируют основу для развития экотуризма, соответствующего международным стандартам устойчивости. Примером является Таджикский национальный парк, включённый в список Всемирного природного наследия ЮНЕСКО, а также горные массивы Памира, отличающиеся высокой степенью сохранности экосистем и низким уровнем антропогенного воздействия.

Ключевые слова: экологические проблемы, туризм, экотуризм, Таджикистан, рекреация, устойчивое развитие.

Annotation. This article examines the characteristics and challenges of developing ecotourism in the Republic of Tajikistan. Today, Tajikistan's mountainous regions, thanks to their rich and diverse ecotourism resources, are considered among the most promising regions in Central Asia. However, the current state of tourism infrastructure in Tajikistan's mountainous regions, including a weak material and technical base (80 percent of which is in need of reconstruction), low service levels, the absence of a viable industry, and the lack of oversight of monuments, memorials, and other sites of natural, historical, and cultural interest, have rendered the Tajik tourism industry completely uncompetitive in the global market. Ecotourism in the Republic of Tajikistan is one of the most promising tourism sectors. Unique climatic and natural conditions, high biodiversity, and the presence of significant protected areas (including more than 20 nature reserves and national parks) provide the foundation for the development of ecotourism that meets international sustainability standards. Examples include the Tajik National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the Pamir Mountains, which boast highly preserved ecosystems and low levels of anthropogenic impact.

Keywords: Environmental issues, tourism, ecotourism, Tajikistan, recreation, sustainable development.

Introduction. Ecotourism is a relatively new term in the tourism industry. People have long been making tourist trips with respect and love for nature, but seriously thinking about the preservation of the environment and the harm caused to it by scientific journal of tourism development began only in the second half of the 20th century.

At the same time, the rapid growth of tourism is accompanied by a number of environmental challenges that require a comprehensive scientific analysis and the establishment of effective boundaries. Furthermore, the maturation of recreational activities and agro-ecotourism offers potential for preserving traditional ways of life, increasing local income, and protecting the surrounding environment. [5, P-42.]

This was facilitated by some global trends in tourism. The rapid growth of tourist flow to such a scale that many natural destinations have suffered irreparable damage. Also, with the growth of urbanization and environmental education, tourists are becoming in demand for new destinations in relatively undisturbed natural areas.

Ecotourism in Tajikistan is inextricably linked to the well-thought-out territorial organization of tourism in various regions. To ensure the long-term viability of this industry and avoid social and economic problems, it is important to establish rules for the operation of tourist zones, especially protected natural areas. The richness of Tajik flora and fauna creates ample opportunities for promoting ecotourism. The country boasts an abundance of picturesque sites: cascading waterfalls, mirror-like lakes, clear springs, mysterious caves, majestic cliffs, unusual geological structures, endemic vegetation, valuable forests, well-maintained parks, and unique landscapes. More than nine hundred distinctive natural landscapes have been identified in the country, which could serve as a basis for the development of ecotourism [8, P-54]

Sociocultural sites, including immovable material and historical-cultural assets, play a significant role in satisfying tourists' spiritual needs and improving their health. Tajikistan, as a mountainous country, possesses rich ecotourism resources suitable for organizing a variety of tours. The country offers ample opportunities for ecotourism, historical tourism, scientific tourism, and spa treatment (for example, in the Hissar-Rasht region, the western part of the Fergana region, and Gorno-Badakhshan). Tourism expert N.S. Mironenko (2010) noted that the aesthetic relationship between humans and nature is based on the perception of beauty, harmony, order, the pure sounds of nature, and the definition of form. It should be noted that environmental factors play a significant role in the development of tourism in Tajikistan's mountainous regions. These include physical and natural resources, a variety of landscapes, climatic conditions, water and mineral resources, as well as a rich biodiversity of flora and fauna.

Domestic and foreign researchers have made a significant contribution to the development of the scientific foundations of ecotourism. Among them are Bersenev Yu.I., Tsoi B.V., Bobilev S.N., Garnov A., Yavnova N.V., Zaliznyak E.A., Ledovskikh E.Yu., Volivok O.A., Moraleva N.V., Zyazina T.V., Khrabovchenko V.V., Zherdev V.N., Tarkhanova N.P., Litvinova I.V., Solomonova L.V., Kosolapov A.B., Vlasova E.M., Khavkin V.A., Kolbovsky E.Yu., as well as Tajik scientists - Dilovarov R., Mamadrizokhonov A., Muhabbatov Kh., Murtazoev U., Karamkhudoev Kh., Yorov Ch., Kodirova M.E., Rijabekov N.Ch. and others. Their scientific works formed the basis for a comprehensive analysis of the problem of developing ecological tourism in the Republic of Tajikistan [1, 3, 4, 5, 6,8]

Ecotourism has a pronounced resource orientation. Tourist and recreational resources are an important factor in the development of tourism in the territory. The main type of resources for the development of ecotourism are natural resources. Protected natural areas can be called the main complex natural resource for ecotourism [5, P-349]. These territories are extremely favorable for the development of ecotourism due to many factors. Natural resources within these territories are protected by the state, have unique specifics that can attract tourists. They are often territorially and transportable accessible, have their own infrastructure and some developments in the field of dissemination of knowledge about nature that may interest tourists.

One of the earliest interpretations of tourism resources is the concept formed within the framework of recreational geography. According to it, tourism resources cover not only natural but also anthropogenic geosystems, including natural phenomena and various artifacts that have comfort characteristics and consumer value, which allows them to be used to organize recreation and health improvement in a specific region. The effective use of such resources becomes possible with the availability of appropriate technological solutions and material infrastructure.

There are currently 282 sanatorium and resort organizations, holiday homes, summer cottages and tourist centers operating legally in Tajikistan. However, during field research in the Varzob and Kofirnigan valleys, summer cottages and recreational facilities operating illegally or semi-legally were identified, which leads to significant financial losses for the budget (estimated at hundreds of thousands of somoni daily) [13].

The development of the tourism industry is complicated by limited transparency in the use of financial resources and the presence of an informal sector of the economy. In order to minimize the non-targeted and shadow use of funds, it is proposed to introduce a two-tier control system:

1. Tourism organizations must provide local authorities with a quarterly report on the use of their share of the funds.

2. Executive bodies in the districts where tourist facilities are located are required to report quarterly to the relevant local legislative authority. The proposed measures are aimed at ensuring the preservation and development of the potential advantages of the republic's tourism and recreational complex. With competent strategic planning and effective management of the tourism sector, in particular in the area of health resort, health and other forms of tourism, such initiatives can become a significant source of income for the economy of individual regions, bringing benefits to both the republic and private companies, as well as local communities. However, conditions based on scientific analysis, regulating the exploitation and protection of natural healing resources, have so far been developed only for a limited number of objects, such as mineral waters and therapeutic muds.

Research Methods. This research is applied in nature and aims to identify the characteristics and developmental issues of ecological tourism (ecotourism) in the Republic of Tajikistan.

1. Analytical method – a brief review and classification of scientific literature, regulatory actions, and strategic documents related to tourism development and environmental protection in Tajikistan.

2. Statistical analysis – data from the Agency on Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, the Tourism Committee, and international organizations (UNWTO,

UNESCO) were used to determine the dynamics of tourism development, including the number of tourists and the state of infrastructure.

3. Sociological methods – a brief survey and interviews with tourists, travel agency employees, and local residents with the goal of understanding their relationships with each other and promoting ecotourism.

4. The method of supervision (field surveys) – during trips to tourist sites (Fan Hills, Iskandarkul, Pamir, national parks) the level of ecological stability of routes, the state of infrastructure and issues of tourist services were studied.

The implementation of such approaches will ensure the protection of the interests of the tourism and recreational complex of the republic. With a properly constructed development strategy and effective management of the tourism sector, especially in the field of health resort tourism, this industry can become a significant source of income for various regions, bringing benefits both at the level of the entire republic and for local communities. However, scientifically based standards of operation and protection have so far been developed only for a limited number of natural healing resources, such as mineral waters and mud.

As noted by Dilovarov R.D. and Negmatov A. M. [3, P- 200]: "According to current standards, 31.5 beds per 10 thousand people are required to meet the needs of the population for health resort treatment, while in fact in the natural and economic zones of Tajikistan this figure does not exceed 3.5-4 beds, and tourism and recreational complexes are unevenly distributed. To optimize such activities, standards for anthropogenic load have been defined for various biogeocenoses, including walking, pedestrian and excursion tourism." [14]:

In many populated areas, such as Dushanbe, Khujand, Kurgan-Tyube and Kulyab, as well as in the Varzob and Romit (Obigarm, Khodja-Obigarm, Shaambari) gorges, there is a negative impact of intensive tourist flow on the ecological situation. For example, the quality of water in the Varzob River and its tributaries is sharply deteriorating due to the discharge of wastewater from the Khodja-Obigarm resort, the Maikhura mining and processing plant, the Takab enterprise and a number of private recreational facilities. As the river approaches Dushanbe, additional inflow of household and industrial waste leads to periodic outbreaks of intestinal diseases.

At the same time, the excessive use of small areas along the rivers by local residents for summer cottages and household needs leads to the risk of "spot" development that does not take into account the environmental impact. As noted by Muhabatov KH, Dilovarova R.D. and Samiev A [7, P- 182], recreational and tourist areas are subject to significant anthropogenic pressure, in particular due to overpopulation, and the illegal construction of holiday homes further worsens the overall environmental condition of the areas. According to their estimates, the resort areas of the Varzob, Ramit and Karatag gorges are actually on the verge of an environmental crisis.

To prevent further deterioration, it is necessary to develop a master plan for the development and improvement of tourist and recreational areas at the state level. Tajikistan has more than 200 mineral springs, 18 mud and salt lakes, as well as tens of thousands of hectares of mountain recreational areas, but their potential for tourism needs has not yet been sufficiently studied [11, P - 45]. In this context, ecotourism can become one of the priority areas of sustainable development, while preserving the natural, cultural and historical heritage.

Analysis and Results.

1 Establishment of a coordination center based at a government agency that will be responsible for the implementation of environmental standards, monitoring, and coordination of market participants.

2. A large-scale advertising campaign promoting the concepts of eco-oriented recreation and rational use of recreational resources.

3. Developing route programs and creating ecological trails in areas with conservation status, as well as preparing scientific and methodological manuals for industry specialists.

4. Conducting training seminars for the local population to explain the principles of ecotourism and involve residents in this area.

5. Infrastructure development, including the construction of new accommodation facilities according to environmental standards, modernization of existing bases taking into account the natural landscape.

6. Integral regulation: defining strategic goals for the development of the tourism and recreational complex, creating a network of representatives of state and private structures at all levels, introducing clear legal definitions and a full cadastral assessment of tourism and recreational zones.

To implement the above measures, it is necessary to establish clear strategic guidelines for the development of the tourism and recreation sector, aligned with national environmental and social policies. In particular:

- Establish a coordination network involving representatives of government agencies, the private sector, and civil society at the local, regional, and national levels.
- Introduce clear legal definitions for improving the infrastructure of tourism and recreation zones, including housing, services, and environmental facilities.
- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the cadastral value of recreational lands and clarify the boundaries (delimitation) of tourism and recreation zones, identifying functional subzones based on environmental, technological, social, and administrative criteria.

When selecting priority sites for ecotourism development, the potential environmental impact, degree of natural vulnerability, proximity to industrial and protected areas, and the availability of infrastructure should be taken into account. The success of integrated tourism and recreation management in mountainous, foothill, and high-mountain regions depends on adherence to the following principles:

- prioritizing sustainable development and environmental management;
- maintaining a balance between environmental protection and economic development;
- long-term planning that takes into account landscape, cultural, and infrastructural features;
- engaging local communities and investors in the implementation of programs and projects.

Conclusions

Thus, in today's environment, particularly following the opening of the strategically important highway connecting China and Afghanistan, and in the context of the Republic of Tajikistan's integration into the international Silk Road initiative, the development of the tourism industry is particularly important as a key tool for regional progress and improving the population's quality of life.

The country's natural resource potential is highly preserved and diverse, creating favorable conditions for the development of environmentally oriented forms of tourism. In a number of regions of the republic, traditional forms of agricultural land use and lifestyle are still preserved, lending these territories additional cultural and ethnographic value. Such natural and sociocultural features not only represent significant interest for domestic and international ecotourism demand but also form the basis for the sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage for regional development.

The main goal is to scientifically research and assess the natural and ecological consequences of our actions, as well as to avoid damage to the mountainous landscape environment.

Tajikistan is more than just a country; it is a treasure trove of priceless natural and cultural assets. Tourism development can not only stimulate the economy but also become a powerful tool for preserving and enhancing the heritage of the past. However, to achieve this, it is necessary to recognize that every decision, every new site, and every initiative must take into account the fragility of the ecosystem. At the same time, it is necessary to create conditions in which local authorities can effectively solve emerging problems. A number of key conclusions follow from the analysis:

1. Environmental protection. All tourism and recreational institutions must strictly comply with the requirements for preserving the environment and resources for sustainable economic growth.

2. Financial support. Republican, regional and local authorities are obliged to give priority attention to the development of tourism and recreation, stimulating those areas that preserve rare and valuable natural resources.
3. Reasonable planning. The construction and operation of tourism and recreational facilities must take into account the natural heritage, ecological and biological diversity of the territory.
4. Compliance with standards and restrictions. All participants in the tourism process, including relevant specialists, must strictly follow established rules when working in particularly vulnerable areas to ensure long-term conservation of resources and sustainable development of the region.

Therefore, ecotourism can and should become an important component of Tajikistan's socio-economic and environmental development strategy, contributing to the protection of biodiversity, strengthening local communities, and enhancing the country's international reputation as an environmentally responsible tourist destination.

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