

INNOVATIVE POTENTIAL OF GREEN TOURISM

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Abstract

This article substantiates that the development of green tourism is an effective tool for preventing and mitigating negative consequences arising from the rapid growth of the tourism industry. Tourism is recognized as a key strategic sector of Uzbekistan's national economy, engaging all four market participants: the state, households, entrepreneurs, and consumers.

Keywords

green economy, tourism, tourism industry, tourism services, green tourism, ecotourism, environmental safety.

Introduction

In recent years, Uzbekistan has faced growing environmental and socio-economic challenges that require sustainable and innovative development strategies. Under the initiative of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev [3], the country has been implementing a consistent macroeconomic policy aimed at developing a "green" economy and establishing it as a key driver of socio-economic progress. The urgency of this transition is underscored by increasing environmental risks, rapid urbanization, and the global emphasis on sustainable development. Addressing these challenges requires expanding scientific research in the field of green economy and tourism, improving the quality of studies, and implementing innovative projects that integrate ecological, social, and economic objectives.

The aim of this study is to investigate the innovative potential of green tourism in Uzbekistan as a strategic instrument for sustainable socio-economic development. Specifically, the research seeks to analyze how green tourism practices can minimize environmental impacts, enhance socio-economic outcomes, and support the country's transition to a green economy. By examining theoretical frameworks, international experiences, and domestic practices, this study provides evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, tourism enterprises, and other stakeholders to promote sustainable and profitable tourism development in Uzbekistan.

Literature Review

The concept of the green economy has emerged as a global framework for sustainable development, integrating ecological, social, and economic dimensions. According to the Danish 92 Group [1], it represents a transformational process that guides economic activities toward environmental sustainability, efficient resource use, and improved societal well-being. The green economy emphasizes both environmental protection and the adoption of innovative technologies, highlighting the importance of systemic change in how resources are produced, consumed, and managed.

Tourism, as a strategic sector in countries with high tourism potential, provides a unique opportunity to implement green economy principles. Rapid growth in tourism, if unmanaged, can lead to ecosystem degradation, cultural erosion, and increased greenhouse gas emissions, posing challenges for environmental protection and long-term socio-economic stability. For instance, research by Oborin [2] demonstrates that uncontrolled mass tourism can have severe negative impacts on host territories, affecting both natural and cultural resources. Khvostik [5] underscores the contribution of tourism to greenhouse gas emissions and the importance of

mitigating its environmental footprint, while Khujaeva [6] highlights the rapid growth of ecotourism and its potential role in promoting sustainable practices. Saidov [4] emphasizes that green tourism strategies not only reduce environmental impacts but also enhance local incomes, create employment opportunities, and improve the ecological image of the country.

The literature collectively highlights the relevance and urgency of developing green tourism in Uzbekistan. The country's tourism sector, recognized as a strategic driver of economic growth, possesses substantial untapped potential. Integrating green economy principles into tourism development can balance economic expansion with environmental preservation, enhance socio-economic outcomes, and strengthen national and international recognition of Uzbekistan as a sustainable tourism destination. Consequently, the advancement of green tourism is not only an economic and environmental necessity but also a key instrument for achieving long-term sustainable development in line with global trends.

Methodology

This study adopts an integrated approach, combining theoretical, analytical, and empirical methods to ensure a comprehensive examination of the subject. The methodology is structured to capture both conceptual frameworks and practical realities of green tourism development in Uzbekistan.

Results and Discussion

Despite its widespread use, the concept of the green economy remains interpreted in diverse ways. Some researchers view it primarily as a set of measures for environmental protection, greening, and waste management, while others consider it a strategic approach to ensure balanced economic growth through renewable energy production, energy efficiency, and the implementation of environmentally oriented technologies. Danish economists propose viewing the green economy not merely as the outcome of specific actions but as a transformational process within the economy, implying profound societal and structural changes. In essence, the green economy represents a shift toward a socio-economic model that addresses environmental degradation, promotes sustainable resource use, and enhances the welfare of the population by increasing the share of environmentally friendly goods and services.

The tourism sector, as a rapidly growing and strategically important industry in Uzbekistan, provides a unique opportunity to implement green economy principles. Tourism growth, if managed sustainably, can generate significant economic, social, and environmental benefits. In 2024 alone, Uzbekistan received 8.6 million foreign visitors, generating USD 2.7 billion in tourism services — a 1.5-fold increase compared to the previous year. The World Economic Forum recognized Uzbekistan as “the most active country worldwide in tourism development” in 2024. However, the rapid expansion of tourism also poses environmental and social risks, including ecosystem degradation, cultural erosion, and greenhouse gas emissions. This dual nature of tourism growth underscores the need for integrating green economy principles to achieve sustainable sectoral development.

Today, despite significant achievements resulting from the rapid development of the tourism sector, its contribution to Uzbekistan's GDP is only 2.3%. This is due to the sector's potential not being fully utilized. According to experts, international experience indicates that in countries with high tourism potential, such as Uzbekistan, the share of tourism in GDP ranges from 10% to 45%. In the future, as the sector's vast potential is realized, its role in GDP formation and employment generation is expected to continue growing.

Although the rapid development of the tourism sector provides a significant boost to Uzbekistan's socio-economic growth, it naturally entails a number of negative consequences. According to experts, approximately 8% of greenhouse gas emissions are generated by tourism-

related activities, including transportation, accommodation, catering, entertainment, and recreational services. The sharp increase in tourist flows leads to the degradation of natural environments, pollution of ecosystems, erosion of cultural traditions and values in the daily life of local communities, and significant negative impacts on biological processes. In particular, the rapid growth of ecotourism, which has increased annually by approximately 30–40% in recent years, may result in the destruction of ecosystems that have developed over centuries, causing irreparable damage to unique natural landscapes. The scientific literature provides extensive theoretical and empirical research on the negative consequences of rapid tourism development, covering economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects.

From the above, two key conclusions can be drawn. First, there is an urgent need to fully realize the vast potential of Uzbekistan’s tourism sector for the benefit of society, leveraging its rapid growth and making it a core driver of the country’s economic development. Neglecting this opportunity or using it inefficiently would be inadmissible. Second, the accelerated development of the sector carries the risk of a range of undesirable and unacceptable negative consequences. In our view, the only way to address this contradictory situation without significant losses is the effective application of green economy principles within the tourism sector.

In recent years, there has been a rapid increase in both the needs and the demand of the population, particularly foreign travelers, for one of the emerging forms of tourism — ecotourism. It should be emphasized that the accelerated development of ecotourism has a negative impact on nature and the environment. Approximately 20–25% of factors adversely affecting human health are related to environmental conditions. These include air and water pollution, soil degradation, the quality of food produced or grown in contaminated environments, and other ecological factors that negatively influence human health. To minimize anthropogenic impacts on the environment, the implementation of comprehensive measures to ensure environmental safety is essential.

The development of green tourism specifically allows for the minimization of the tourism sector’s negative impact on nature and the environment, while simultaneously serving the interests of all stakeholders. Theoretical studies have demonstrated that the implementation and rapid development of green tourism are equally important for all parties: society (the state), the tourism industry, producers of tourism products (tourism enterprises), and consumers (tourists) — households (see Table 1).

Table 1.

The Importance of Green Tourism Development in Uzbekistan from the Perspective of Stakeholders

Stakeholders	Benefits
Government (Society)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creation of multiplier effects across all related sectors connected to tourism. 2. Minimization of negative impacts of tourism in host areas. 3. Improvement of the welfare of people living in tourist zones. 4. Enhancement of the country’s image. 5. Reduction of carbon emissions. 6. Use of environmentally friendly transportation.
Tourism Enterprises	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of new tourism products and routes. 2. Increased attractiveness of tourism services through green technologies. 3. More efficient use of economic resources and higher profitability.

Stakeholders	Benefits
Households	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creation of new jobs. 2. Increased income. 3. Growth in demand for household economic resources. 4. Opportunities to establish contacts and interact with people from other countries. 5. Broadening the horizons of family members.
Consumers (Tourists)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Direct contact with nature. 2. Health benefits. 3. Enjoyment of natural resources. 4. Exposure to customs, national traditions, and values of other peoples, including rural populations.

The development of green tourism requires the acquisition and implementation of costly environmentally friendly technologies necessary to manage intensive tourist flows. However, these investments are expected to yield substantial profits in the long term. A stable demand is emerging for tourism services based on green technologies, which is projected to grow exponentially over time.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, it is essential to combine the capabilities of both the public and private sectors in Uzbekistan, develop a strategy to support the ideology of transitioning to sustainable green tourism as a promising direction for sectoral development, and implement urgent measures for its consistent practical realization. The globalization of the world economy, increasing environmental risks, and climate change driven by rapid urbanization inevitably position green tourism as a key factor in the country's socio-economic development.

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