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FOSTERING REGIONAL TOURISM: EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL OF AGRITOURISM

Rakhmatullaeva Firuza Mubinovna¹

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to show the importance of tourism industry, indicate the current situation of tourism in Uzbekistan. This article examines the concept of regional tourism, includes analysis of problems of development of agritourism potential as a factor of development of the region, identifies its impact on the development of rural areas. This paper discusses the need to develop agritourism in Bukhara region, which is one of the main directions of tourism.

Keywords: *tourism, regional tourism, development of agritourism, regional development, agritourism activities.*

Introduction

Tourism is one of the most important socio-economic activities related to development at local, regional, national and global level, which can trigger growth and prosperity. Tourism as a relatively new and global social-economic phenomenon, which achieved its boom during the last century, has a significant influence on economies of many countries. This industry became one of the main income sources for many countries where natural, cultural, economic, social and environmental recourses are identified as potentials that may contribute to national economy through tourism development.

Tourism has been consolidating in recent decades as a key sector for economic and social development, job creation and the welfare of nations, a driver of integration and development in the region. Tourism takes an important part in almost every country, thus, every country pays certain attention to conditions that contribute to tourism development and its benefits.

Tourism in Uzbekistan is a major component for regional and overall economic development, which can trigger growth and prosperity. The purpose of this article is to show the importance of tourism industry, indicate the current situation of tourism in Uzbekistan, discuss current stage of agritourism development in Bukhara region, and in the conclusion to give proposals for future development of agritourism.

Research methodology

The research method is applied based on the research content while based on the nature of the research, descriptive – analytical methods are used. To collect data, the following ways have been used.

- A. Library studies such as using: books, journals, statistics, documents
- B. Using networks and the internet
- C. Examining the information from the relevant offices

¹ Associate Professor, Candidate of economic Sciences, Bukhara State University, Bukhara, Uzbekistan

Analysis and results:

In recent years, the tourism sector in Uzbekistan has been showing a notable dynamism that is reflected in the growth of domestic tourism and an increase in international tourist arrivals. Before 2016, the growth rate of the number of foreign visitors averaged 8 % per year, in 2017 it was 7 % and exceeded 2.84 million people. For the Republic of Uzbekistan as well 2019 was a record year – it received over 6.748 million international tourists up from 5.346 million the year before. (Figure 1.)

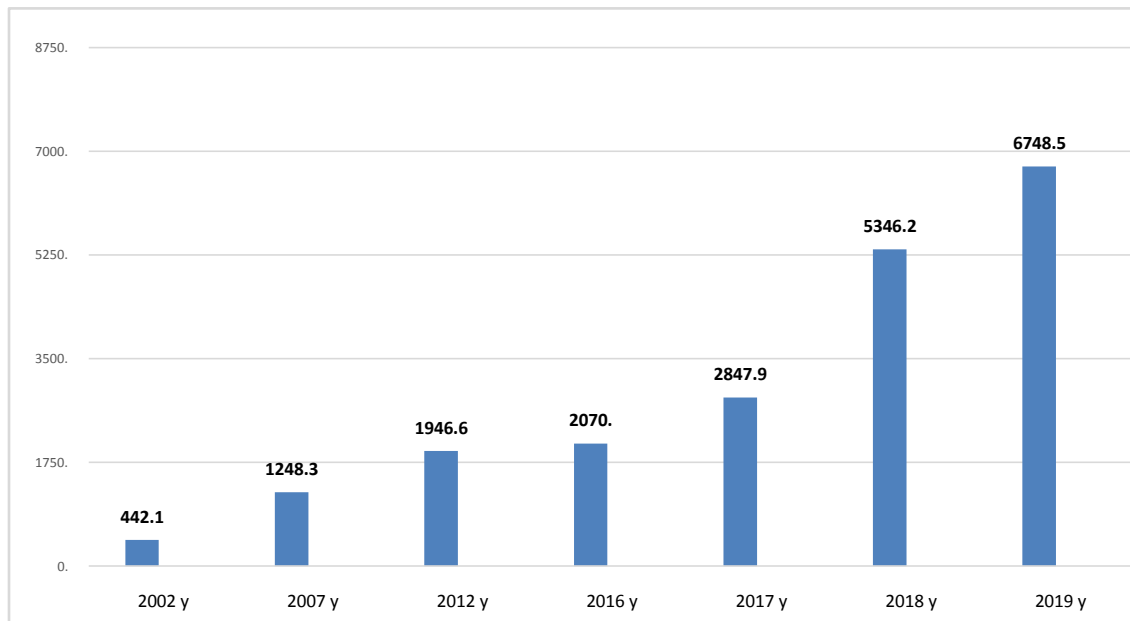


Figure 1. International tourist arrivals in Uzbekistan, (thousand people) 2002-2019 yy.

Source: <https://stat.uz>

In 2017-2019, the volume of tourism services exports doubled, amounting to 546.9 million US dollars in 2017, 1 billion 041 million US dollars in 2018, and 1 billion 313 million US dollars in 2019.

Many scientists consider regional tourism as a development tool at regional and local level, and have underlined the importance of tourism for the development of the country and its regions. The development of tourism in regions is the part of country's socio-economic development and is based on local and country wide resources.

According to Professor Alirzayev, tourism increases the employment in regions, uses the regional resources in placement of production and service facilities, develops them, and forms the budgets and increases the profits of the regions by meeting the demand of local and foreign tourists¹

The development of tourism in regions is based on several regional characteristics. The regions' geographical position, their resources, financial situation, the marketing activities are the main factors in defining the role of tourism for the regions². World experience shows that successful promotion of the country in the world market is achieved by successful promotion of its specific destinations. It is very

¹ Alirzayev Ali, Turizmin iqtisadiyyati və idarəedilməsi, İqtisadiyyat Universiteti, Bakı, 2011. P.165.

² Alp Timur and Hasan Olali, Turizm ekonomisi, İzmir, 1988. -P.245.

important to intensify the work to promote specific regions of the country on the international tourism market, that is, it is necessary to advertise not the country, but its individual territories.

According to V. A. Kvartalny and I. V. Zorin, regional tourism is the tourism activity typical for a particular region, a set of countries or territories with the same conditions of tourism development and a similar level of tourist adoption¹.

The region from positions of interests of regional tourism is considered, in-the first, as spatially-defined territory on which objects of tourist interest and the tourists serving infrastructure are settled down. Secondly, it is considered as a socio-economic complex that ensures the sustainable development of tourism in the region through the provision of skilled workers, the formation and management of tourist destination.

Regional tourism is a rather complex and organized system, which is formed from a variety of interconnected elements (recreational resources, tourist infrastructure, environmental and personal security, etc.), which perform the functions of meeting the tourist needs within the boundaries of a certain territory and are the necessary conditions for its development. Therefore, it is advisable to consider it further as a:

- System of tourism attractors and infrastructure in the region;
- Large, independent, intersectional complex of the regional economy, that provides employment and reception of additional income to the region;
- Socio-economic resource that requires the organizational and economic mechanism of management;
- As a target resource for the restoration of the vitality of the local population and visiting tourists;
- Object of management, which is the basis for the formation of sustainable tourism development strategy in the region.

In addition, the specificity of tourism as a segment of the regional economy lies in the special nature of the interaction between tourism and the region.

Uzbekistan, thanks to the variety of its culture and its history, its natural and architectural attractions, and the hospitality of its people, has great potential for tourism development. In Uzbekistan there are regions with a huge potential of tourism development and the tourism industry is considered to develop at a rapid pace. The tourism potential of the regions is determined by the available resources in them, and the tourism resources serve as the foundation for the development of the tourism sector in the region.

Each region has its own unique character. The unique is hidden in its culture, namely in its folk traditions, traditional craft products, folklore, through which it can offer unique products specific to individual regions and present itself by means of them. The cultural product of the region can be extended by cultural and historical monuments, museums, galleries. Also tourism as a sphere is dependent on natural potential of the certain region. That is why it is important to use this potential to develop activities that could be interesting and attractive for tourism participants².

Tourism is one of the priority directions of socio-economic development in the Bukhara region. The tourism potential of the region is huge and diverse. There are 660 objects of material and spiritual heritage.

¹ Zorin I.V. Management of tourism: Tourism and sectoral systems. – M.: Finance and statistics, 2002. – P.31-34

² Gburova J., Matusikova D. Tourism as important regional development factor. ЕКОНОМІЧНИЙ ЧАСОПИС-XXI. 9-10(1)'2014. - P.102-105.

The Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan of May 19, 2017, "On Immediate Measures to Develop the Tourism Potential of the City of Bukhara and the Bukhara Region in 2017-2019", and the Decree of August 16, 2017, "On the Development of Tourism in the Years 2018- 2019" are important steps towards the realization of this sphere. Bukhara region has great opportunities for the development of agritourism, ecotourism, mountainous tourism, religious tourism, sport tourism, medical tourism, recreational tourism and etc.

The need for restructuring the existing aspects and development of new aspects of tourism is one of the preferential requirements for tourism development in Bukhara region. It should be noted that the static factors of tourism development in the region, namely the combination of natural-geographical and cultural-historical factors, have permanent, unchanged values. While the dynamic factors-demographic, socio-economic, logistical and political conditions are modified.

A great role in the development of the tourism industry has the development of agritourism, or in other words, rural tourism, which can provide regional economic development while preserving and improving the quality of natural environment. Agritourism is suggested to produce many benefits for farms, their operators, the surrounding communities, and society overall.

In realization of agritourism activities first of all take part farmers, so agritourism gives a chance to them to gain important sources of additional income or it can become alternative activity in the region. Farmers can offer different tourism services while maintaining their agricultural character, like for example continuing agricultural production. Agritourism production and offering a variety of tourist activities contribute to the revitalization of traditional crafts and products.

Agritourism in Bukhara region has further chances for organization in the future. It is possible because Bukhara region is characterized by dispersion of farms, considerable surplus of labor in the village, unique nature and culture values and heritage.

Factors contributing to the development of agritourism in Bukhara region:

- Availability of agricultural services and goods that attract foreign tourists and even local residents;
- Formation of a specific rural culture;
- Geographical location of Bukhara region, consisting of desert and semi-desert areas, which indicates the uniqueness of animals and plants growing on this territory;
- Cultural heritage. There are 660 historical monuments in Bukhara region, about 200 of which are located in rural areas. This allows organizing several types of tourism together.

Tourists' goals of visiting agricultural enterprises and farms can be very different: experience of participation in agricultural activities (harvesting grapes, milking cows, participating in the preparation of dairy products), educational goals, tasting natural local products, and others. Based on these goals, it is possible to offer various services.

It is very important that the statistics say that 7659 farms operate in Bukhara region at present. In addition, 171 historical monuments of Bukhara region are located in rural districts: 43 in Bukhara district, 11 in Vobkent district, 32 in Gijduvan district, 14 in Zhondor district, 2 in Karaulbazar district, 16 in Peshku district, 9 in Romitan district, 5 in Shofirkon district, 34 in Kagan district, 5 in Karakul district. This, in turn,

makes possible to organize additional services for agro-tourists - various excursions to attractions that tell about the history of this village

Conclusions

Research of the region's tourism development resources, determination of the tourism potential of individual administrative districts and scientific justification of tourism development directions will improve the accuracy and effectiveness of management decisions in the field of regional tourism development, enhance the investment attractiveness of the region and will contribute to obtaining a multiplier effect from the implementation of tourism activities in the region.

The analysis of the problem of development of agritourism in Bukhara region gives the following major conclusions:

- Agritourism is the form of non agricultural entrepreneurship and represents additional or alternative source of income for agricultural families;
- Agritourism encourages action to protect and care for the landscape heritage;
- To meet agritourism demand and to increase the number of tourists visiting farms cooperation between farmers should be developed;
- Agritourism is a convenient diversification strategy because it does not necessarily require excessive investments in farm infrastructure, labor or equipment;
- Farmers offer activities similar to their existing farm procedures, utilize their existing resources;
- Engagement of farms owners with tourism associations should be encouraged, which play important role in the process of agritourism management, by supporting different activities;
- Agritourism in Bukhara region is believed to develop very fast in the future, in a consequence of what it is recognized as one of strategic industries of economy of the region.

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