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## THEORETICAL BASIS OF ECOLOGICAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE SYSTEM OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Qodirov Aziz Anvarovich<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

The article highlights the role and importance of ecotourism in the system of socio-economic relations. Theoretical and methodological bases of the concept of ecotourism are studied. The specific features and principles of development of ecotourism are also presented. The author's definition of the concept of ecotourism is given, and its objective necessity in the development of the national economy is studied in detail.

**Key words:** tourism, eco-tourism, mountain, nature reserve, environmental education and enlightenment, principle, development, competitiveness, tourism potential.

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Today, tourism is one of the most profitable sectors of the national economy and much attention is being paid to the further development of tourism in the world economy. Currently, the World Tourism Organization recognizes adventure tourism, marine and water tourism and ecotourism as the most prospective areas of tourism. Among above types of tourism, one of the youngest and most promising areas is ecotourism, which is characterized by its development and high income. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, ecotourism has been remaining one of the five key strategic directions for tourism development. In recent years, the share of ecotourism in the total volume of the global tourism industry has exceeded 10%, and its growth rate is 2-3 times higher than the corresponding indicators in the entire tourism industry<sup>2</sup>.

The unique beauty of our country, specific landscape, a variety of rare flora and fauna, world-class archeological finds, paleontological remains, unusual geological sections, hundreds of natural monuments create basis for the development of this type of tourism. In this regard, in recent years, Uzbekistan has been paying real attention to the development of ecotourism.

In his Address to the Oliy Majlis, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev said, "Our country has a unique nature, national reserves, and great potential for the development of tourism in mountainous areas. In particular, the fact that the development of medical tourism, pilgrimage tourism and ecotourism will give a great impetus not only to the development of the economy, but also the social sphere [1] is a clear proof of the above.

Along with the results achieved in our country, it is necessary to carry out a large amount of works, which should be put into practice in the future, to conduct new environmental research on the development of tourism and rational and efficient use of available potential.

In foreign practice, the term "ecotourism" was first officially used in the first half of the 80s of the twentieth century. This term in general reflects the idea of harmony between ecology and recreation and is

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<sup>2</sup> Ecotourism in Uzbekistan: prospects and opportunities. July 18, 2018. Available at: <https://uzbekistan.lv/en/ecotourism-in-uzbekistan-prospects-and-opportunities/> (last seen 11.09.2018)

widespread, but there is no clear and generally accepted definition of the term "ecotourism" in the scientific literature till today.

It is necessary to explain the concept of "ecotourism", first of all, taking into account the views of foreign and national scientists and defining the general principles that characterize the essence of this concept for regional and local governments to implement the rational use and management of ecological tourism resources. Below we analyze the concept of "eco-tourism" in various sources and literature.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature defines "eco-tourism" as "trips to untouched areas of nature that are responsible for the environment. The aim is to enjoy nature and cultural monuments, to study nature in order to protect it and not cause significant damage to the environment, to ensure the socio-economic participation of the local population and the interest of the local population in this activity.

The international community of ecotourism understands ecotourism as a responsible journey to the natural areas, which contributes to the protection of nature and the improvement of the lifestyle of the local population.

Expert in the field of ecological tourism T. Velax explains ecotourism as "tourism that encompasses trips to untouched natural areas, the main purpose of which is to gain an understanding of the natural and cultural-ethnographic features of the area without compromising the integrity of the ecosystem. It creates favorable economic conditions for the protection of nature and natural resources by the local population".

The Australian National Ecotourism Strategy defines ecotourism as nature-oriented tourism, which includes environmental education programs and is carried out in accordance with the principles of ecological balance.

In addition to the comments of international organizations focused on nature, this concept is widely explained in the researches of national and foreign scientists.

In particular, scientists S.Ross and G. Vollar in their article "The Evolution of Ecotourism", argue that ecotourism can contribute to the conservation and development of nature and establish positive synergistic interactions between biodiversity, tourism, and local communities. This, in turn, will be ensured by the proper organization and management of this activity. D.Fennel in his article, "Tourism routing", explains that ecotourism is a robust form of natural tourism, primarily focused on living and understanding wildlife, organized in accordance with ethical norms, which in turn reduces the impact on the natural environment, use of natural resources and costs. The concept of ecotourism has been studied by a number of Uzbek scientists, and we comment on the views of some of them.

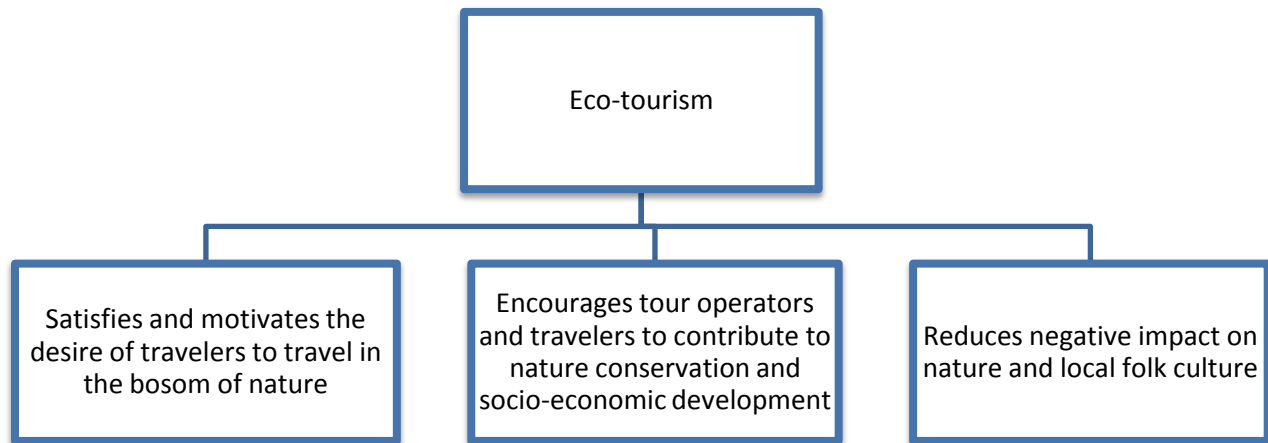
Doctor of Economics, Professor O.Kh. Hamidov described ecotourism as "an innovative and lucrative direction based on the criteria of destination (recreation, area) in the structure and classification of tourism activities, specializing in nature travel and having the least negative impact on nature" [2]. Of course, some of the concepts in this definition are specific to the period of research, for example: calling ecotourism as an innovative direction is a definition specific for that period. Also, O.X. Khamidov also clarifies the differences between ecotourism and other types of tourism, saying in his research: "The difference between ecotourism and other types of tourism is that the guide and group leader serves as advisors for nature conservation. Instead of prioritizing traditional convenience on eco-tours, they prioritize nature conservation, demonstrating to visitors the benefits of living in a "field" and limiting convenience in practice "[3]. Through this idea, the economist has shown the advantages of eco-tourism over other types of tourism

According to the research, the main objectives of eco-tourism are: raising the culture of interaction between nature and man, environmental education and enlightenment, fostering a sense of personal responsibility for the environmental situation, developing and strengthening ethical norms of behavior in the natural environment. recreational purposes (restoration of mental and physical strength of a person, rest).

Features of eco-tourism include:

- motivating and satisfying the desire of travelers to interact with nature through purposeful trips to relatively unchanged and untouched areas. These areas are represented by ubiquitous, typically national and natural parks, reserves, natural monuments, and reserves.
- weak negative impact on the natural environment (“soft tourism”). It is this aspect that has made eco-tourism the only form of economic use of natural resources in specially protected natural areas;
- reduce the negative impact on the environment and culture, and encourage tour operators and travelers to promote nature conservation and socio-economic development;
- combines leisure, recreation and education for travelers, which assumes that there are strict requirements for visitors, compliance with which is a key condition for the successful development of this form of tourism
- the existence of interests for the local population from the development of ecotourism and the absence of contradictions between its interests and the socio-economic development of the regions.

We can schematically express these properties as follows:



**Figure 1. Peculiarities of eco-tourism**<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, local communities are involved in the exhibition facilities not only as service personnel, but also have the right to live in the protected area, hence the ability to lead a traditional lifestyle, engage in traditional activities, as well as make efficient use of natural resources.

Thus, ecotourism can be interpreted as an activity based on the following principles:

<sup>1</sup> Prepared by author

- Minimization of negative complications of ecological and socio-cultural nature, support of ecological sustainability of the environment;
- A trip to nature, the main content of such trips is to "get acquainted with nature, local customs and culture";
- Assistance in the protection of nature and the local socio-cultural environment;
- Environmental education and enlightenment;
- Participation of the local population and income from tourism activities, which creates economic motivation for them to protect nature
- Economic efficiency and sustainable development of the visiting regions.

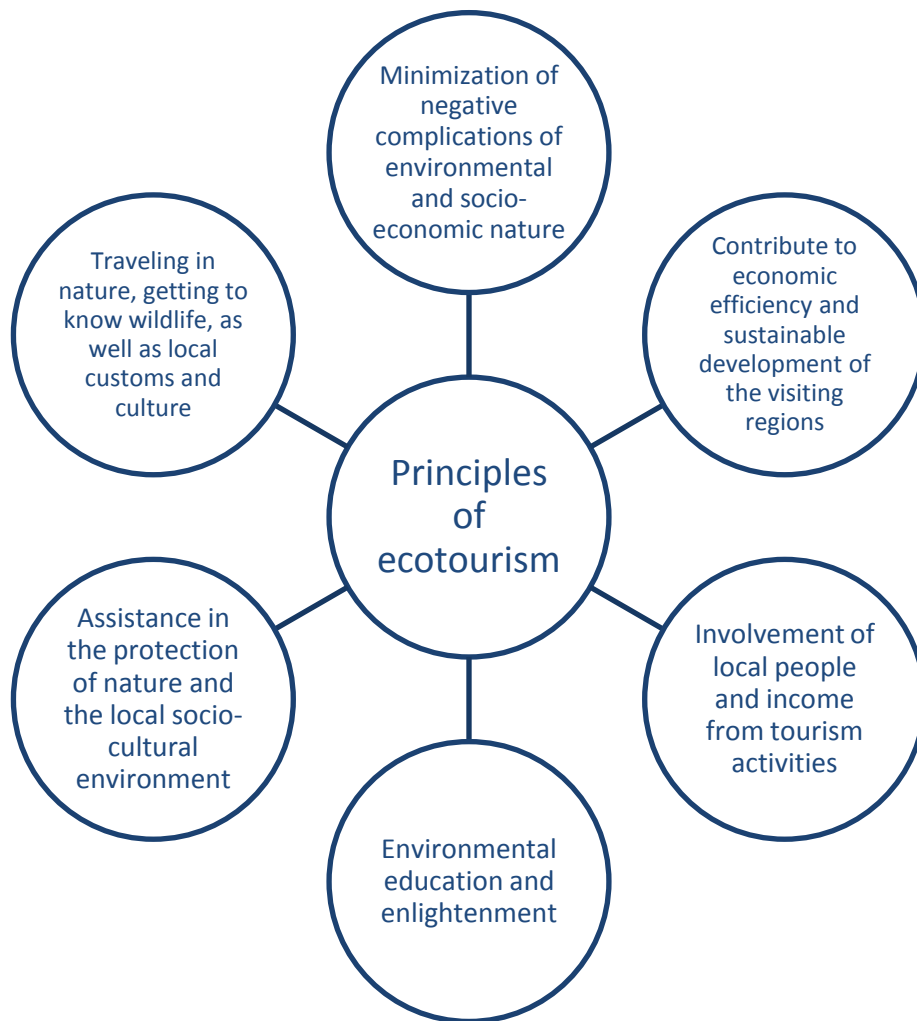


Figure 2. Principles of ecotourism.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared by author

In a broad sense, eco-tourism can be defined as one of the forms of recreation, which is directly related to the use of natural potential, including travel and recreation in an unchanging natural environment.

This activity is related to the healing of human beings in harmony with the preserved nature. Thus, eco-tourism is a shining example of the harmony of nature, travel and ecology, which contributes to the development of human mental and physical strength, as well as cognitive abilities.

According to D.Wester, (shown in Table 1) such principles of eco-tourism as environmental education and enlightenment, participation of local people and their income from tourism activities, as well as economic efficiency and contribution to the sustainable development of the visited areas, requires additional description.

**Table 1 Peculiarities of the principles of ecotourism**

<b>Principles</b>	<b>Different features</b>
Environmental education and enlightenment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visitors to the natural area clearly feel their responsibility to preserve nature and then follow the rules of conduct at the place of travel.</li> <li>• Tourists receive information from the guide at the beginning of the trip about the natural area where the visit is planned and the rules of conduct;</li> <li>• Qualified staff, such as guide-ecologists, will be involved in conducting the tour;</li> <li>• Excursions are an integral part of environmental awareness;</li> <li>• Natural and cultural landscapes, which are ecologically friendly and ecologically interesting;</li> <li>• The guides acquaint tourists with local environmental problems and their solutions, as well as by conducting activities aimed at solving environmental problems in the area;</li> <li>• The program includes visits to nature museums and museums of local lore, the type of travel itself is carried out on educational ecological corridors;</li> <li>• Tourists are involved in solving local environmental problems.</li> </ul>
Involvement of the local population and income from tourism activities, which creates economic motivation for nature conservation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revenues from the implementation of eco-tourism programs are received by various social groups and strata of the local population, where it is economically viable for the local population to preserve the natural environment;</li> <li>• The local population is involved in the tourism business and tours and has the opportunity to develop their traditional forms of management;</li> <li>• Local products and labor are used in conducting tours.</li> </ul>
Contribute to economic efficiency and sustainable development of the visiting regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration of eco-tourism into regional and local development plans;</li> <li>• Integrated approach to the development of tourism in the destination;</li> <li>• Careful planning and management of ecotourism and monitoring of ongoing processes;</li> <li>• Revenues from tourism help replenish the local budget and support the local economy.</li> </ul>

Thus, explaining the concept of ecotourism through the above principles, we have defined the author's definition as follows: *“Ecological tourism is a type of tourism with combination of nature, travel and ecology, raising the culture of interaction between nature and man, ecological education and enlightenment, fostering a sense of personal responsibility for the ecological situation, developing and strengthening ethical norms of behavior in the natural environment(recovery of mental and physical strength, recreation).*

In conclusion, eco-tourism is one of the types of tourism that makes an important contribution to the development of the national economy. Therefore, the development of this type of tourism has become an objective necessity in present-day.

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