



THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF DEVELOPING GREEN TOURISM AT HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL TOURISM SITES

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Abstract: *this thesis analyzes the formation of the green tourism concept, its stages of scientific development, and the directions of its application at historical and cultural heritage sites. Based on the principles of environmental, economic, and social sustainability, green tourism aims to protect nature and improve the well-being of local communities. The study examines the emergence of scientific perspectives on green tourism, the widespread popularization of the sustainable development concept through the "Brundtland Report," and the adoption of related terminology in scientific and official circles. Using Uzbekistan as an example, the thesis substantiates the need to deepen indicator-based research in regions such as Bukhara province, alongside recent scientific studies. In conclusion, green tourism is presented as a comprehensive model that not only preserves historical and cultural heritage but also strengthens environmental safety, enriches tourism experiences, and stimulates local economic development.*

Keywords: *green tourism, ecotourism, sustainable development, SDGs, cultural heritage, indicators, digitalization.*

Green tourism is a form of tourism based on the principles of ecological, economic, and social sustainability, aimed at protecting nature, developing local communities, and fostering environmental consciousness among tourists. The initial scientific research on green tourism began to emerge in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The concept of "sustainable development" was first introduced in the United Nations' "Brundtland Report" (Our Common Future, UN)³². In the tourism sector, the concept began to be applied after the 1990s. Between 1990 and 1995, the term "Green Tourism" started to be used in scientific literature and official circles. Specifically, this terminology began to be employed within the framework of efforts to develop ecologically sustainable tourism in rural areas of England and Scotland. In 1997, the Scotland Green Tourism Business Scheme, an ecotourism certification program, was developed, and initial evaluation criteria were established³³. From this period onwards, scientific articles and abstracts began to be produced. The first journals in this field were titled "Annals of Tourism Research" and "Journal of Sustainable Tourism." Between 1995 and 2005, the stage of scientific substantiation commenced. For instance, David Weaver, in his book "Sustainable Tourism:

³² <https://www.are.admin.ch/are/en/home/media/publications/sustainable-development/brundtland-report.html>.

³³ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/377298145_The_Green_Tourism_Business_Scheme_GTBS

Theory and Practice," established a theoretical foundation by linking green tourism with ecotourism, agro-tourism, and cultural tourism³⁴.

Since 2005, global scientific research and studies have been conducted. The UNWTO developed indicators for green tourism through its Sustainable Tourism Indicators and Destination Management system³⁵. After the adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030, green tourism became directly linked to goals such as SDG 12 (Responsible Production and Consumption), SDG 13 (Climate Impact Mitigation), and SDG 8 (Sustainable Employment). As of today, hundreds of articles are being published annually in Scopus, Web of Science, MDPI, ScienceDirect, and Springer databases.

Table 1.1

Global scientific research conducted on the concept of "Green tourism" at historical and cultural heritage sites³⁶

Author/Researcher	Country	Title of work / scientific research
David Weaver	USA / Canada	Sustainable Tourism (2001)
Bernard Lane	Great Britain	Rural Tourism and Environmental Approaches (1994)
Tanja Mihalic	Slovenia	Environmental Management and Competition (2000)
Mowforth & Munt	Great Britain	Tourism and Sustainability (1998–2015)
Font X. & Tribe J.	Europe	Ecotourism certification analysis (2001–2012)

Among foreign, CIS, and local scientists, there are a number of specialists who have conducted effective research analyzing the concept of "green tourism" in various regions of Uzbekistan. For example, in their article "Evaluating Culturalization Strategies for Sustainable Tourism Development in Uzbekistan"³⁷, Jeong, J.Y. and Marty, P. developed sustainable strategies for tourism in Uzbekistan. Sergeeva A., Abdullina A., and Yanchuk S. conducted research on elevating tourist facilities along the Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan border³⁸ to a new level in terms of quality and sustainability in their article "Development of Cross-Border Tourism Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan Border." Bedir Ömer's article "Development of

³⁴ <https://www.scirp.org/reference/referencespapers?referenceid=1779670>

³⁵ <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/tradeserv/Workshops/Madrid/UNWTO%20presentation%20-%20item19.pdf>

³⁶ Author's work based on sources

³⁷ Jeong, J.Y. et al. (2023). Evaluating Culturalization Strategies for Sustainable Tourism Development in Uzbekistan. Retrieved from <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/15/9/7727>

³⁸ Sergeeva, A. et al. (2022). Development of Cross-Border Tourism... Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan Border. Retrieved from <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/14/19/12734>



Cultural and Faith Tourism in SCO countries: Uzbekistan potential" provides a detailed exploration of the potential for religious and cultural tourism in the context of Turkic countries, particularly Uzbekistan³⁹. In the article "Communicating across tourism silos for inclusive sustainable partnerships," McIntosh Alison J. conducted scientific research on the integration of cultural heritage and sustainable tourism⁴⁰.

Local scholar Kilichov M.H. (2024) developed a model for managing Uzbekistan's historical heritage in the context of sustainable tourism in his article "Harnessing Heritage: Sustainable Tourism in Uzbekistan"⁴¹. Meanwhile, E. Karimov has conducted scientific research on the analysis of UNESCO's integration with Central Asian cultural heritage⁴².

Theoretical approaches and conceptual models related to the concept of green tourism also exist, which primarily encompass the fundamentals of using green energy at cultural sites, providing waste-free services, and maintaining the balance between production and consumption through the selection of local products and services⁴³. The European Union has developed a sustainable tourism assessment system called ETIS (European Tourism Indicator System), which includes indicators for cultural heritage preservation, community participation, and environmental monitoring. The A-B-C Model (Attractions - Basics - Context) incorporates Attractions - cultural heritage sites (for example, the Poi Kalon ensemble in Bukhara), Basics - green transport and eco-friendly hotels, and Context - political and social environment, legislation, and international ratings integration. Based on these models, an analysis of factors influencing green tourism development at cultural heritage sites has been conducted. Research has been carried out on creating ecological infrastructure, including low-carbon transport, energy-efficient lighting systems, and biodegradable sanitary facilities. Information is provided on the integration of digital technologies, such as audio guides with QR codes, virtual tours, and environmentally safe walking routes. Excursions organized and managed by local residents, souvenirs, and principles of green craftsmanship have also been analyzed. Most importantly, practical and theoretical work has been undertaken to increase environmental literacy among both residents and tourists, including the creation of environmental educational banners, trainings, and special green paths for children and tourists.

Overall, the number of scientific studies on ecological tourism (or green tourism) has grown rapidly since 2000. This growth has been particularly notable since 2015, when the concept of "Green tourism" was integrated with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), leading to even greater attention to scientific research in this field. In the international

³⁹ Bedir, Ö. (2024). Development of Cultural and Faith Tourism in SCO countries. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/download/article-file/3383633>

⁴⁰ McIntosh, A.J. (2018). Communicating across tourism silos for inclusive sustainable partnerships. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alison_McIntosh

⁴¹ Kilichov, M.H. (2024). Harnessing Heritage: A Framework for Sustainable Tourism Development in Uzbekistan. Retrieved from <https://cajitmf.centralasianstudies.org/index.php/CAJITMF/article/view/721>

⁴² Karimov, E. (2023). UNESCO integration of Central Asian heritage into tourism. Retrieved from <https://www.unesco.org/en>

⁴³ <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/resource-efficiency/what-we-do/sustainable-consumption-and-production-policies>



scientific arena, research on ecological tourism is now focused on deep, systematic, and innovative solutions.

Between 2020 and 2024, domestic scientists in Uzbekistan produced numerous articles, dissertations, and project recommendations on the topic of ecological tourism. While research on ecotourism exists in Uzbekistan, it is not fully integrated with the "green economy," and digital, indicator-based studies have not yet been fully developed. Specifically, in the case of the Bukhara region, preliminary analytical research on ecotourism is available, but it needs to be deepened based on regional indicators, innovative technologies, and an economic model.

From a legislative perspective, a number of initiatives have been implemented. The Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PQ-21 dated 12.01.2024⁴⁴ "On measures for accelerated development of ecological tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan," the new edition of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. ORQ-549 dated 18.07.2019⁴⁵ "On Tourism," and positive approaches such as the nationwide "Green Space" initiative are contributing to the development of the "Green Tourism" concept at historical and cultural heritage sites in the region. Based on scientific approaches, strategic directions were established, namely: a green certification system (Green Heritage Label) was introduced, methods for managing tourist flows in harmony with the ecosystem (regulating pilgrimage days) were developed, and a system for the ecological reconstruction of historical monument infrastructure (including solar panel lighting and rainwater utilization systems) was implemented.



Decrees and resolutions adopted by the Government and the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan are emerging as one of the main factors in diversifying tourism services, rationally utilizing available resources, and developing ecotourism in Uzbekistan. In particular, special attention is being paid to creating favorable conditions for developing tourism infrastructure in mountainous and remote areas, as well as desert regions, with the aim of increasing employment and expanding sources of income for the population. Based on the Resolution "On Measures for the Accelerated Development of Ecological Tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan," under the leadership of the Ministry of Ecology, Environmental Protection and Climate Change, mechanisms have been developed for the formation of tourist clusters in eco-territories - namely, buffer zones of state reserves, national nature parks, forestry areas, water bodies, and other natural territories. These clusters are to be leased for a period of 10 years through the 'E-auction' system, with the possibility of extension provided.

Activities to be carried out in these areas are being planned based on ecological requirements, with the involvement of foreign investors and project developers. Additionally, it is stipulated that tourist facilities will be constructed using environmentally

⁴⁴Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PP-21 dated January 12, 2024 "On measures for the accelerated development of ecotourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan

⁴⁵ Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. ZRU-549 dated July 18, 2019 "On Tourism" (new edition).



friendly materials. Furthermore, a complex of modern services is envisaged, including visitor centers, electric vehicle charging stations, photo tourism zones, ecological signposts, selfie zones, and camping services.

According to the decree, the national program "Journey to Nature" for the development of ecotourism, as well as the list of permitted activities in state-protected areas, have been approved, and their planning documents are being developed. In this process, funding sources have been identified through the Fund's resources, foreign grants, and private investments.

Incentive measures for business entities are provided through tax benefits, land allocation, and infrastructure support mechanisms. In particular, legal entities that have established modern recreational facilities in desert areas will be eligible for a 50% discount on profit tax and land tax for a period of 3 years.

A mobile platform called "Journey to Nature," aimed at digitalizing ecotourism, is currently being developed. This platform will enable users to plan trips, make reservations, and obtain information about routes, among other functions.

This policy document will serve as an important strategic foundation for the comprehensive development of ecotourism in Uzbekistan, focusing on an integrated approach, expanding public participation, increasing investment attractiveness, and ensuring the sustainable preservation of natural heritage sites.

The development of green tourism at historical and cultural sites not only contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage but also reduces negative environmental impacts, enriches tourism experiences, diversifies income sources for local populations, and strengthens Uzbekistan's position as an international tourism brand.

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