

**ТУРИЗМ: МИРОВОЙ ОПЫТ**  
**ТУРИЗМ: ӘЛЕМДІК ТӘЖІРІБЕ**  
**TOURISM: WORLD EXPERIENCE**

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IRSTI 06.61.33  
UDC 332.122

<https://doi.org/10.46914/1562-2959-2021-1-2-167-174>

**A.T. TLEUBERDINOVA,<sup>1\*</sup>**

d.e.s., professor.

\*e-mail: [tat404@mail.ru](mailto:tat404@mail.ru)

**V.B. KULIK,<sup>2</sup>**

c.t.s., associate professor.

e-mail: [kulv2015@mail.ru](mailto:kulv2015@mail.ru)

**X.V. KULIK,<sup>3</sup>**

PhD student.

e-mail: [kulkw@mail.ru](mailto:kulkw@mail.ru)

<sup>1</sup>Turan University, Kazakhstan, Almaty

**ECOLOGICAL TOURISM AS A FACTOR  
OF RURAL REGION DEVELOPMENT  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN**

**Abstract**

The study was carried out within the framework of program-targeted funding by the Committee of Science of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan ("Development of the concept and mechanisms of balanced territorial development of the economy and society of Kazakhstan"). The purpose of the study is to determine the role and significance of the development of ecological tourism in the Republic of Kazakhstan as a factor in the diversification of the sectoral structure of the country's rural economy. The study used a structural-functional approach, a review of scientific publications, including foreign authors from the Scopus, Web of Science databases; state programs and regulatory legal acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on this issue in the Republic of Kazakhstan, statistical data. The article provides a comprehensive analysis of the theoretical foundations of economic diversification and its benefits. The theoretical and methodological aspects of the development of ecological tourism as a factor in the socio-economic development of rural areas have been studied. As part of the state program for the development of the tourism industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2019–2025, tools have been proposed for transforming tourism into a highly profitable sector of the economy, the tasks of which include the creation of 75 thousand jobs in remote rural areas. The authors of the article consider the issues of priority of the development of rural areas, the need to find ways to normalize living conditions and economic growth, which should be the diversification of the economy. Tourist and recreational resources that provide the regions of the country necessary for the development of ecotourism were identified and substantiated.

**Key words:** ecological tourism, industry, resources, rural areas, economy, development, recreation.

**Introduction**

The importance of diversification for the economy of territories. Economy activity diversification is among determining factors of regional and local economy development, as well as demographic increase. Economy dependence on the impact of external factors define the necessity of economic diversification, which provides less vulnerability to fluctuations and negative changes. It has been marked that the higher the level of development of economy of a country, the more diversified its sectoral structure. On the one hand, diversification drives up production output and income through provision of broad range of economic activity, growth in employment, on the other hand provides

reduction of risks minimizing the impact of global external changes. This process supports economic stability and sustainable development conditions.

### Key points

One of the extrinsic advantages of diversification at the local and regional level is associated with innovations due to knowledge side effects, which arise between sectors. Most commonly, the more diversified and multidivisional economy structure, the more steps and interrelationships are characteristic of local economic activity, the higher is its focus on innovation. Such diversity nudges application of technological solutions from one sector in other sectors of the economy.

Another advantage for local development, which is associated with diversification, is related to the concept of attractiveness and competitiveness. Economic diversification, in a nutshell, implicates diversification of workers as well. High concentration of professional workers in a specific area ensures high innovation opportunities and, as a consequence, its competitive capacity. Therefore, economic diversification is a source of competitive advantage for territories/regions for several reasons (Figure 1).

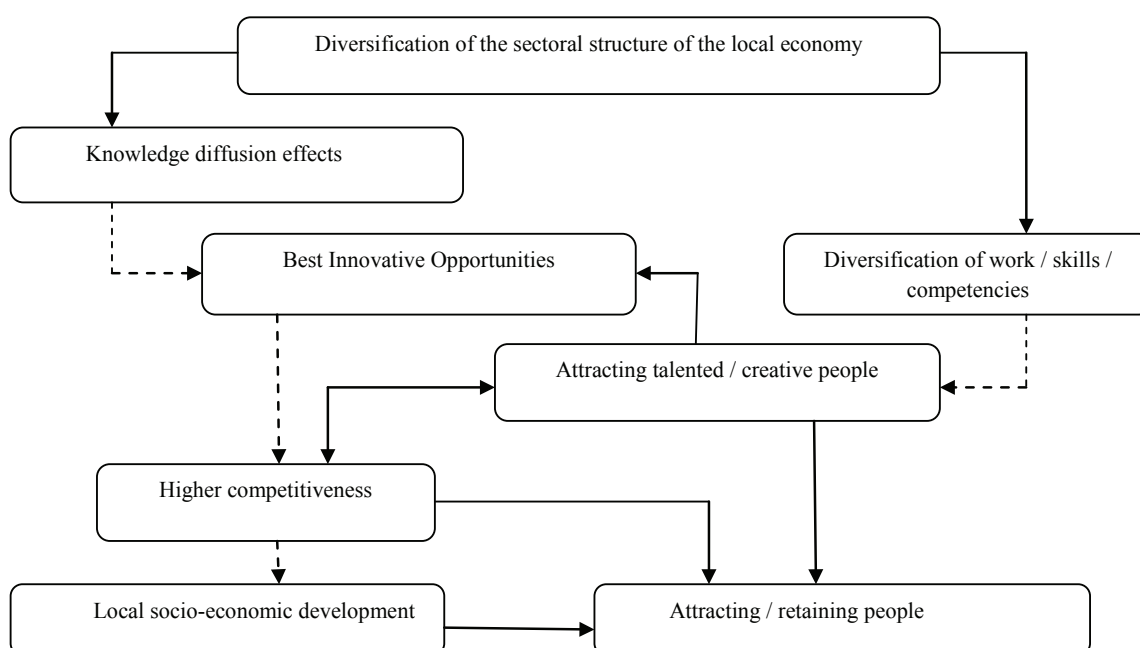


Figure 1 – Potential effects of economic diversification for territories

Note – Compiled by the authors based on [1].

Diversification and development of rural territories. The issue of economy diversification is rather relevant in rural regions, which are generally distinguished by lower socioeconomic level of development, weak infrastructure, shortage of machinery and equipment, absence of the possibility for social and economic advancement of the population. Such situation in rural regions is prevailing in many countries.

Unfortunately, Kazakhstan is not an exception. The share of agriculture, which is the main type of activity in rural regions, makes up only 2.3% in the GDP of the country [2, p. 28]. Overall the income level of the rural population is only half of the national average, poverty level in rural regions is 2,7 times higher than in urban areas. Average revenue for one member of a family is higher than 23 thousands tenge. About 40% of the population, employed in agriculture are self-employed and gain not sufficient income for maintaining a decent standard of living [3]. There is a steady decline in the share of rural population from 45.5% in 2010 to 41.8% at the beginning of 2020, which indicates dissatisfaction with the standards of living [4]. Due to the fact that essential share of leaving for cities is made up by the youth, the population size of the working age is decreasing

Such state of actions determines the priority of rural areas development, the emergency of wayfinding to normalize living conditions and economic growth, which economy diversification is meant to be. Ecological tourism has sufficiently high potential, as a perspective direction in rural area of the country.

Ecological tourism as a form of diversification. Over the past ten years, ecotourism has been gaining popularity and it is recognized as one of the tools for sustainable development of any state according to experts from the World Tourism Organization. According to many experts, ecotourism accounts for more than 10-20% of the profit from the entire tourist market.

The importance of active development of ecological tourism cultural development within the country was noted by the President of the country Kasym-Zhomart Tokayev in another Message “Kazakhstan in a new reality: time for action” [5].

Almost 20 years ago International Consulting Group for Monitoring World Tourism (IPK group, World Travel Monitor Company), defined diversity of natural landscapes from wide steppes to snow-covered mountain peaks) and local population as the main motives for travelling to Kazakhstan [6]. The following places were defined as the most attractive places for tourists in Kazakhstan:

- ◆ free / wild nature (74%);
- ◆ steppes with salty and fresh lakes (69%);
- ◆ endless spaces and landscapes (68%);
- ◆ the culture of nomads (63%);
- ◆ mountains (59%);
- ◆ virginity of nature (58%).

Acceleration of socio-economic development of rural territories and improvement of local population well-being has become the main reason for the development of ecological tourism in rural regions, which can help in solving a set of issues at a time: provision of economic growth through economic diversification; improvement of infrastructure; reviving of traditional crafts, customs and cultural identity; increase of opportunities for social contact and exchange; ensuring the protection and improvement of both natural and man-made environment; recognition of priorities and potential of rural areas by politicians and economic experts.

The key opportunity to involve people in tourism is development of local tourism business. The multidisciplinary nature of tourist services plays a significant role, since the demand for various types of services generates a variety of their offer: accommodation, transport, food, guide and tour guide services, entertainment, local crafts, etc. Finally, local population will have the opportunity to find their own niche among a wide variety of range of production of tourist product components.

Key priorities of the ecological tourism, which ensures is dynamic development in the modern world are sustainable development of regions involved in ecotourism: nature conservation of ecotourism programs and technologies; the use of market mechanisms for the formation of the ecological worldview of the population.

According to a number of scientists, ecotourism provides variety of benefits:

- ◆ provision of high quality tourist services;
- ◆ stimulating national and / or local economic development;
- ◆ diversification / addition of the economic base;
- ◆ formation of social benefits and improvement of infrastructure;
- ◆ generating funds for the management and conservation of natural areas;
- ◆ providing an economic justification for the protection of natural resources;
- ◆ promoting awareness of the environment / values and supporting their conservation by local residents and tourists;
- ◆ assistance in the preservation of cultural heritage.

Foreign experience evidences that tourism in protected areas contributes to the creation of public goods. A fine example for that can be: successful development of indigenous ecotourism in the Caribbean, linking economic objectives to the protection of natural resources and cultural heritage; the development of community tourism in the Asia-Pacific region with socio-economic and environmental benefits; the rise of ecotourism in Volcano Park in Rwanda [7].

## Literature review

The concept of ecological tourism. If to rotten in the history of ecotourism concept development, initially it was defined by G. Ceballos-Lascurein as: travel to relatively virgin or unpolluted natural areas for the specific purpose of exploring, enjoying the landscape, plants and wildlife, as well as the existing cultural manifestations of the area (both past and present Current definition was later revised by him, which reflects the evolution that the concept of ecotourism has undergone, since it adds such aspects as the ecological responsibility of the tourist, contributing to the conservation of the environment and providing socio-economic benefits to the local population [8].

According to Ceballos-Lascureina, ecotourism is a multidimensional philosophical concept, which is a part of ecological development, requiring planning based on strict managing principles and rules increasing sustainability. He suggested to modify eco-tourist profile through awareness and knowledge of the natural environment and cultural aspects into an active position of responsibility [8]. Extensive discussion of the definition promoted inclusion of new dimensions and expanded the concept.

Ecotourism Society under UNWTO celebrates ecotourism as purposeful travelling to natural areas in order to gain a deeper understanding of local culture and natural environment, which do not violate the integrity of ecosystems, while making the protection of natural resources beneficial for local population (Ecotourism society 1994) [9].

The Quebec World Ecotourism Conference 2002 proclaimed the following main distinctive principles:

- ◆ conservation of natural and cultural heritage;
- ◆ involvement of local communities in planning, elaboration, development and exploitation of natural and anthropogenic resources, as well as promoting the well-being of the local population;
- ◆ explanation to visitors of natural and cultural heritage in any tourist destination;
- ◆ presentations focused on individual and independent tourists, as well as organized group excursions and walking tours for small groups.

Principles of International Society of Ecotourism could be added to the above mentioned list in relation to ecotourism:

- ◆ formation of ecological and cultural awareness and education of respect for the environment;
- ◆ providing positive experiences and presenting good practices to visitors and locals;
- ◆ ensuring direct positive effects of environmental protection – financial benefits,
- ◆ rights and opportunities for the local population;
- ◆ increasing the sensitivity of the host community to the political, social and environmental climate [10].

Comparison of ecotourism definitions helped to define its necessary three components: natural, educational and sustainable management including economic and social issues.

## Materials and methods

The study used a structural-functional approach, a review of scientific publications, including foreign authors from the Scopus, Web of Science databases; state programs and regulatory legal acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on this issue in the Republic of Kazakhstan, statistical data. The article provides a comprehensive analysis of the theoretical foundations of economic diversification and its benefits. The theoretical and methodological aspects of the development of ecological tourism as a factor in the socio-economic development of rural areas have been studied.

## Discussion

Certainly, particular difficulties in the development of ecotourism always exist and quite general, not depending on the country. On one hand attraction of tourists to picturesque places pursues the economic interests of the country, ignoring the ecological possibilities of the destination. On the other hand, excessive number of tourists can result in destruction of the environment in such areas. Recently, under the pressure of different factors influencing the development of ecological tourism,

several modern trend have developed. Firstly, ecological tourism becomes more and more diverse, as new forms and manifestations appear. Secondly, there has developed an increasing integration of ecotourism with other types of tourism and tourism industries. Ecological tourism has already become the part of massive directions, for instance, in many cultural and educational or beach tours, as an excursion component, short-term visits to reserves, national parks and other protected natural areas are provided. Appearing of new trends changes the original purpose and meaning of ecotourism, and more often blurs the concept of ecotourism [11].

Another important issue lies in the sustainability of ecological audit provision, monitoring of ecotourism components and systems of ecological management, which is often ignored due to financial constraints. A serious problem was noted in relation to the operationalization of aspects of ecotourism, as tourism industry, which is rather strongly influenced by the supply-demand balance, is pressured by the degree of cross-border supply, consumption abroad, commercial presence and its own mobility. Finally, ecotourism is a complex and interesting field of research with particular components covering many aspects from marketing fundamentals to environmental management.

Experience of foreign countries demonstrates not only successful development of ecotourism, but also fact of omissions which lead to the development of particular complications. Weak organization of ecotourism development results in opposite results to the declared potential benefits, creating to one degree or another various socio-economic and environmental problems, which then can lead to dissatisfaction of local population and reluctance to develop tourism on their territory. Nevertheless, majority of countries keeps actively promoting ecotourism as a way of national, regional and local development promotion.

According to experts, ecotourism issues can be solved with the help of tax measures, educational and administrative tools, as well as information management on the benefits of destinations. There exist an opinion that it is necessary and possible to implement supply chain management in tourism through integration of corporate information, resource sharing and creation of strategic alliances, as it is difficult to achieve sustainable development of ecotourism involving only individual tourism enterprises. Ecotourism management is not the issue of one-enterprise or government responsibilities. Unity of management by all stakeholders is need in solving this issue [12].

Ecotourism development in Kazakhstan is important to implement, taking into account experience of foreign countries, considering not only the best results but also the shortcomings that have taken place, according to the principle “it is better to learn from other people’s mistakes”.

## **Conclusion**

Ecotourism development in Kazakhstan is dictated by the need of sectoral structure diversification of rural regions economy, which contribute to the improvement of the living standards level of native population. The availability of micro and small tourism business for the population of rural regions will help to solve employment issues, income and living standards increase of the population. Again, tourism development will give a boost to the improvement of local amenities, development of related sectors, the service sector, etc. For ecotourism development regions of the country are supplied with necessary tourist and recreational resources: a variety of wild landscapes, flora and fauna, as well as the uniqueness of the history and culture of the people, combining a nomadic and sedentary lifestyle, is of much interest to foreign tourists on the one hand, satisfying the nostalgic, educational demand of its own citizens, on the other. As many experts discuss, world globalization, erasing boundaries between countries, along with research and technology advancement brings standardization of cultures of people, which results in the loss of their unicity, originality, national customs, historically formed over hundreds of years under certain specific living conditions, are forgotten. Therefore, the necessity of ecotourism development is also justified with the importance of preserving one’s own culture, instilling interest in it and educating the younger generation, the formation of patriotism, and understanding of national identity. Moreover, expansion of domestic tours will allow significantly meet the requirements of Kazakhstan citizens in tourist services not only base on the price reduction, but the expansion of variety and quality, which and most especially is relevant during post-pandemic period, which boosts domestic tourism.

### **Funding information.**

This research is funded by the Science Committee of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan (targeted funding program “Developing the concept and mechanisms of balanced territorial development of the economy and society of Kazakhstan”).

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**А.Т. ТЛЕУБЕРДИНОВА,<sup>1\*</sup>**

э.ф.д., профессор.

\*e-mail: [tat404@mail.ru](mailto:tat404@mail.ru)

**В.Б. КУЛИК,<sup>1</sup>**

т.ф.к., доцент.

e-mail: [kulv2015@mail.ru](mailto:kulv2015@mail.ru)

**К.В. КУЛИК,<sup>1</sup>**

докторант.

e-mail: [kulkw@mail.ru](mailto:kulkw@mail.ru)

<sup>1</sup>«Тұран» университеті,

Қазақстан, Алматы қ.

## **ЭКОЛОГИЯЛЫҚ ТУРИЗМ ҚАЗАҚСТАН РЕСПУБЛИКАСЫНЫҢ АУЫЛ АЙМАҚТАРЫНЫҢ ДАМУЫНЫҢ ФАКТОРЫ РЕТІНДЕ**

### **Аңдатпа**

Зерттеу Қазақстан Республикасы Білім және Ғылым Министрлігі Ғылым комитетінің бағдарламалық-мақсатты қаржыландыру шеңберінде жүргізілді («Қазақстан экономикасы мен қоғамының теңгерімді аумақтық даму тұжырымдамасы мен механизмдерін әзірлеу»). Зерттеудің мақсаты – Қазақстан Республикасында экологиялық туризмді дамытудың елдің ауыл шаруашылығының салалық құрылымын әртараптандыру факторы ретіндегі рөлі мен маңызын анықтау. Зерттеуде құрылымдық-функционалдық тәсіл, ғылыми басылымдарға, соның ішінде Scopus және Web of Science мәліметтер базасынан шетелдік авторларға шолу қолданылады; осы мәселе бойынша Қазақстан Республикасындағы мемлекеттік бағдарламалар мен Қазақстан Республикасының нормативтік құқықтық актілері, статистикалық мәліметтер. Мақалада экономиканы әртараптандырудың теориялық негіздері мен оның артықшылықтары жан-жақты талданған. Ауылдық жерлердің әлеуметтік-экономикалық дамуының факторы ретінде экологиялық туризмді дамытудың теориялық және әдістемелік аспектілері зерттелді. 2019–2025 жылдарға арналған Қазақстан Республикасының туристік индустриясын дамытудың мемлекеттік бағдарламасы шеңберінде шалғайдағы ауылдық жерлерде 75 мың жұмыс орнын құруды қамтитын туризмді экономиканың жоғары рентабельді секторына айналдыру құралдары ұсынылды. Мақала авторлары ауылдық аумақтарды дамытудың басымдығы мәселелерін, экономиканы әртараптандыру болуы керек тұрмыс жағдайлары мен экономикалық өсуді қалыпқа келтіру жолдарын іздеу қажеттілігін қарастырады. Экотуризмді дамытуға қажетті елдің аймақтарын қамтамасыз ететін туристік-рекреациялық ресурстарды анықтады және негіздеді.

**Тірек сөздер:** экологиялық туризм, сала, ресурстар, ауылдық жерлер, экономика, даму, рекреация.

**А.Т. ТЛЕУБЕРДИНОВА,<sup>1\*</sup>**

д.э.н., профессор.

\*e-mail: tat404@mail.ru

**В.Б. КУЛИК,<sup>1</sup>**

к.т.н., доцент.

e-mail: kulv2015@mail.ru

**К.В. КУЛИК,<sup>1</sup>**

докторант.

e-mail: kulkw@mail.ru

<sup>1</sup>Университет «Туран»,

Казахстан, г. Алматы

## **ЭКОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ ТУРИЗМ КАК ФАКТОР РАЗВИТИЯ СЕЛЬСКИХ ТЕРРИТОРИЙ РЕСПУБЛИКИ КАЗАХСТАН**

### **Аннотация**

Исследование проведено в рамках программно-целевого финансирования Комитетом науки Министерства образования и науки Республики Казахстан («Разработка концепции и механизмов сбалансированного территориального развития экономики и общества Казахстана»). Цель исследования – определение роли и значения развития экологического туризма в Республике Казахстан как фактора диверсификации отраслевой структуры экономики сельских территорий страны. В исследовании использован структурно-функциональный подход, проведен обзор научных публикаций, в том числе зарубежных авторов из баз данных Scopus, Web of Science; государственных программ и нормативно-правовых актов РК по данной проблеме в РК, статистических данных. В статье проведен всесторонний анализ теоретических основ диверсификации экономики и ее преимуществ. Изучены теоретико-методологические аспекты развития экологического туризма как фактора социально-экономического развития сельских территорий. В рамках государственной программы развития туристской отрасли Республики Казахстан на 2019–2025 годы предложены инструменты трансформации туризма в высокодоходную отрасль экономики, в задачи которой включено создание 75 тысяч рабочих мест на отдаленных сельских территориях. Авторы статьи рассматривают вопросы приоритетности развития сельских территорий, необходимость поиска путей по нормализации условий жизнеобеспечения и экономического роста, каковым должна стать диверсификация экономики. Определены и обоснованы туристско-рекреационные ресурсы, которыми обеспечены регионы страны, необходимые для развития экологического туризма.

**Ключевые слова:** экологический туризм, отрасль, ресурсы, сельские территории, экономика, развитие, рекреация.