

IRSTI 06.71.57:71.37

UDC 338.48

JEL L83

<https://doi.org/10.46914/1562-2959-2025-1-1-211-224>

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ECOLOGICAL TOURISM AS A FACTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

Abstract

Ecotourism, being a rapidly growing area of the tourism industry, has a significant impact on the development of the regions of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The article discusses the potential of eco-tourism as a tool for sustainable regional growth through maintaining a balance between nature protection and economic progress. Taking into account the diversity of Kazakhstan's natural landscapes, such as mountains, deserts, forests and lakes, the country has unique conditions for becoming an important center of ecotourism. However, well-thought-out plans, government support and active involvement of local residents are necessary for the successful development of this area. The study analyzes the current state of ecotourism in the regions of Kazakhstan, namely in the Almaty region and the East Kazakhstan region, highlights successful projects and identifies problems typical of less developed territories. The article examines the impact of ecotourism on job creation, the development of local infrastructure, as well as the preservation of natural and cultural heritage. The key factors contributing to the strengthening of the role of ecotourism in the regional economy are highlighted: infrastructure development, promotion of local environmentally friendly products, educational programs and partnerships between the public and private sectors. The challenges of sustainable tourism development are also discussed, including environmental degradation, lack of investment and low public awareness of the importance of ecotourism.

Key words: ecotourism, regional development, sustainable development, economic impact, infrastructure, job creation, natural areas.

Introduction

Ecotourism is considered as a form of sustainable tourism aimed at protecting nature and improving the living conditions of local communities. An important place is occupied by responsible visits to natural areas in order to preserve them and improve the well-being of the local population. Ecotourism

can significantly influence the regional economy by creating jobs, developing local businesses and attracting domestic and external investments in tourism infrastructure. In Kazakhstan, the development of ecotourism can play a key role in reducing regional imbalances, stimulating economic growth in less developed regions and strengthening their competitiveness.

The concept of ecotourism, based on the principles of environmental protection and sustainable development, is becoming increasingly recognized around the world. The term «ecotourism» itself is relatively new to the tourism industry and covers only one segment of this market. Ecotourism is also often described as «nature tourism that promotes conservation and sustainable development». There are several key criteria of ecotourism in the literature, which can be summarized as follows:

- ♦ Minimal negative physical and social impact on the visited area.
- ♦ Providing environmental education to tourists in natural places.
- ♦ Active economic participation of local residents [1].

A study conducted by Mustafa (2021) shows that ecotourism has a positive effect on the economic growth of regions, increasing incomes by 10%. The study also notes that ecotourism plays an important role in supporting programs aimed at empowering local communities, contributing to an increase in the income of local authorities [2].

However, the development of ecotourism aimed at stimulating economic growth requires careful management planning, since poorly implemented ecotourism can lead to inefficient use of its benefits. In addition to benefiting local governments, ecotourism also provides additional income to local communities. Research has shown that ecotourism provides important opportunities for people involved in this activity, helping them meet their daily needs and contributing to positive changes such as turning consumers into producers and workers into business owners [3].

The purpose of the study is to study ecotourism as a factor of economic development in various regions of the Republic of Kazakhstan in order to unlock its potential for sustainable growth.

Research objectives:

1. To study the current state of ecotourism in Kazakhstan.
2. Assess the economic impact of ecotourism on regional development, including job creation, income generation, and support for local businesses.
3. Identify problems and barriers to the development of ecotourism in Kazakhstan, including policy gaps, infrastructural constraints and environmental risks.
4. To present practical recommendations on the economic development of regions based on ecotourism.

Materials and methods

For a research article on the impact of ecotourism on economic growth in Kazakhstan, the following research methods were used:

1. Data analysis. The study of statistics on tourist flows and income related to tourism, based on official reports and data from national parks. Analysis of government programs and strategies aimed at stimulating the development of ecotourism.
2. Economic impact model analyzes. Conducting an analysis of the direct, indirect and induced economic impact of ecotourism on the regional economy.
3. To develop practical recommendations for the economic development of the regions through eco-tourism.

The most prominent research areas in ecotourism include theoretical studies, such as the description of specific types of ecotourism and discussions on its development, as explored in the works of I.N. Panov, Yu.V. Faronova, and E.V. Alec. In the second half of the 19th century, there was a notable increase in interest and academic activity in this field. The contributions of scholars like Ru Ian Cienti T and O. Trofimova provide significant insights into the characteristics of ecological tourism. Additionally, the challenges of managing ecological tourism in specific regions and countries have been extensively addressed by foreign researchers, including H.M. Donohoe, R.D. Needham, P.F.J. Eagles, T. Sandwith, C. Shine, L. Hamilton, D. Sheppard, A. Zalatan, A.R. Gaston, A. Allcock, W. Jones, S. Lane, and J. Grant [4].

Results and discussion

Kazakhstan, a vast state located in Central Asia, has enormous natural and ecological potential and is distinguished by a variety of landscapes. From vast steppes and arid deserts to majestic mountains and crystal clear lakes, the country is home to a wide variety of ecosystems. Its rich natural heritage includes unique ecological zones that support a diverse flora and fauna, including many species endemic to the region.

Demonstrating a strong commitment to environmental conservation, Kazakhstan has created many protected areas, including national parks, nature reserves and UNESCO World Heritage Sites. These territories are crucial for the conservation of biodiversity and the development of eco-tourism. The breathtaking landscapes of the country, such as the famous canyons, endless steppes and serene Alpine lakes, open up exceptional opportunities for eco-tourism, attracting nature lovers from all over the world.

Ecotourism in Kazakhstan is based on principles that combine environmental sustainability, preservation of cultural heritage and support for local communities. Special attention is paid to responsible practices aimed at minimizing the impact of tourism on the environment while protecting natural ecosystems and biodiversity. By encouraging meaningful interaction with the environment, ecotourism promotes environmental education and awareness. This approach provides economic benefits to local communities, improving their quality of life and contributing to development. In addition, ecotourism respects local traditions and culture, creating opportunities for constructive exchanges between travelers and host communities. Ultimately, the goal of ecotourism is to provide unique and memorable experiences while preserving natural and cultural heritage for future generations [5].

According to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of the Republic of Kazakhstan, about 9 million foreign tourists visited the country last year – twice as many as in 2022. The number of ecotourists has also increased: from 2 million in 2022 to 2.4 million in 2023. International ecotourism statistics show the number of tourists visiting different countries each year and the area of protected natural areas, such as in the USA, Finland, Kazakhstan, Australia and Kenya. These data illustrate the contribution of each country to the development of ecotourism and the extent of their protected areas.

The development of tourism infrastructure plays a key role in ensuring local economic growth in the context of sustainable development. The ecotourism infrastructure includes a variety of facilities and services that support environmentally sustainable tourism with minimal environmental impact. The key elements of such an infrastructure are shown in figure 1.

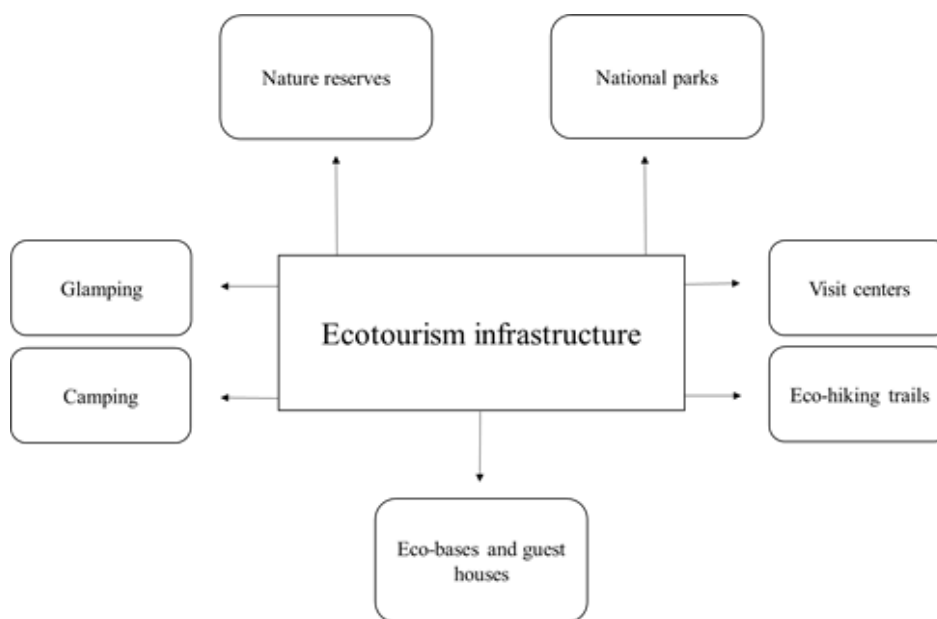


Figure 1 – Ecotourism infrastructure

Note: Compiled based on the source [6].

According to the Forestry and Wildlife Committee of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the total area of specially protected natural territories (reserves) in the country is 30.8 million hectares.

As of 2024, the ecotourism infrastructure in Kazakhstan includes 10 nature reserves, 13 national parks, 14 visit centers, 38 glamping sites, and 25 campgrounds. Currently, 139 hiking trails and 49 trails operate in the state national nature parks, and landscaping activities are regularly carried out. The number of eco-bases and guest houses is growing, especially near national parks and nature reserves, although exact figures are not available. Thus, these facilities make a significant contribution to the development of ecotourism, attracting an increasing number of visitors to explore the wonders of nature in Kazakhstan [7].

In the course of the research, we studied reports and initiatives that highlight the development of ecotourism in Kazakhstan and noted the following:

- ◆ The Government of Kazakhstan has made eco-tourism a priority as part of its broader tourism and environmental protection strategies. In 2021, more than 1.5 million tourists visited national parks, which is 40% more than in 2020. To further promote ecotourism, the Government has developed master plans for several key national parks (such as Ile-Alatau and Charyn) to improve infrastructure, including the creation of visitor centers, glamping sites and tent cities [8].

- ◆ The United Nations Development Programme (UN), within the framework of the Biodiversity Financing Initiative (BIOFIN), cooperates with the Government of Kazakhstan in order to develop ecotourism in protected areas. This includes integrating environmentally friendly practices into tour planning, promoting sustainable community engagement, and introducing regulations for tourism in national parks.

- ◆ The UN also supported the development of virtual tours in five protected areas, including the Kolsai Kolderi and Katon Karagai National Parks. These virtual tours aim to reduce physical stress on natural sites while promoting ecotourism both locally and internationally [9].

One of the initiatives contributing to the development of ecotourism is the pilot implementation of the project «National Data Bank on the state of the environment and natural Resources». This includes an interactive map of natural resources «TABIGAT», which provides real-time visualization of data in areas such as ecology, forest resources, wildlife, fisheries, water resources, infrastructure and tourism.

These initiatives are part of a broader effort to position Kazakhstan as an attractive destination for ecotourism while ensuring the preservation of its natural heritage. In addition, the government has prioritized investments in ecotourism, planning to invest \$1.25 billion by 2030, which includes the creation of new trails, campgrounds and facilities for visitors.

Also ecotourism directly supports multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 global goals established by the United Nations in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They provide a universal framework for addressing the world’s most pressing challenges, including poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, and climate change, while promoting peace, justice, and prosperity [10] (figure 2).



Figure 2 – 17 global goals of SDG

Note: Compiled based on the source [10].

SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth. Ecotourism promotes economic empowerment by creating employment opportunities, especially in rural and low-income areas. It provides livelihoods in various sectors, including tourism, hospitality, crafts and environmental protection. By promoting entrepreneurship and inclusive economic growth, ecotourism helps uplift communities. This sector stimulates the local economy through a multiplier effect, as increased tourist spending benefits related industries such as transport, agriculture and crafts. In addition, ecotourism attracts investments in infrastructure and services, providing long-term economic benefits and contributing to sustainable development.

SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities. Ecotourism encourages the development of sustainable, environmentally friendly infrastructure such as visitor centers, waste recycling systems and low-impact residential spaces. These improvements improve the quality of life of local residents, maintaining a balance between the growth of tourism and the preservation of the environment. Ecotourism also promotes cultural preservation by providing communities with a platform to share their traditions and heritage, strengthening social cohesion and identity. By maintaining sustainable links between the city and the countryside, ecotourism contributes to the creation of harmonious, sustainable communities.

SDG 15: Life on land. Ecotourism plays a vital role in biodiversity conservation by financing the protection and management of natural habitats, national parks and wildlife reserves. Ecotourism raises awareness of environmental issues for both visitors and local communities, contributing to increased responsibility for ecosystem conservation. In addition, ecotourism provides tangible economic incentives for biodiversity conservation as communities recognize the long-term benefits of maintaining healthy ecosystems to sustain tourism. Ecotourism, combining local economic activities with environmental objectives, ensures the sustainable use of natural resources.

By aligning with SDG 8, SDG 11 and SDG 15, ecotourism is becoming a powerful tool for sustainable development. This ensures a balance between economic growth, social integration and environmental care, ensuring the prosperity of communities and preserving their natural and cultural heritage for future generations.

In regions of Kazakhstan where ecotourism is developing, such as national parks or nature reserves, understanding its economic impact helps policy makers and stakeholders identify how ecotourism contributes to broader regional goals such as improving infrastructure, improving the well-being of the population and sustainable development. The economic impact model analyzes the direct, indirect and induced impact of ecotourism on the economy of Kazakhstan, measuring how tourism spending contributes to job creation, income and stimulation of other sectors (figure 3) [11].

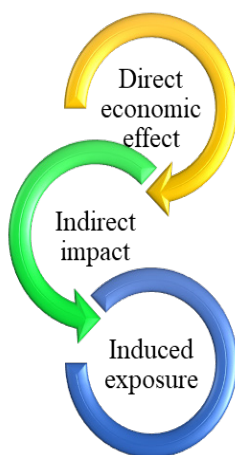


Figure 3 – Economic impact model

Note: Compiled based on the source [11].

1. Direct economic effect. The direct economic effect includes the expenses of tourists for accommodation, food, transport and environmental protection measures. In 2023, about 9.2 million foreign tourists visited Kazakhstan, of which about 460,000 were ecotourists. Let's assume that each ecotourist spent an average of \$700 on accommodation, food, transportation and other services:

$$\text{Direct expenses} = 460,000 \text{ ecotourists} * 700 \text{ USD} = 322 \text{ million USD.}$$

2. Indirect impact. Indirect effects include increased revenues in related industries such as suppliers of local goods, transportation companies, and artisans. For example, significant investments have been made to create infrastructure, including glamping sites and visitor centers. Using an indirect cost factor of 1.5 (this means that for every dollar spent by tourists, an additional \$0.50 circulates in the economy through related industries):

$$\text{Indirect costs} = 322 \text{ million US dollars} * 1.5 = 161 \text{ million US dollars.}$$

3. Induced exposure. Induced exposure occurs when employees of tourism-related businesses spend their income on local goods and services, including food, housing and other local goods. Let's assume that the induced multiplier is 1.2:

$$\text{Induced expenses} = 161 \text{ million US dollars} * 1.2 = 193.2 \text{ million US dollars.}$$

The overall economic effect of ecotourism in Kazakhstan can be estimated by summing up direct, indirect and induced impacts:

$$\text{Total effect} = 322 \text{ million US dollars (direct)} + 161 \text{ million US dollars (indirect)} + 193.2 \text{ million US dollars (induced)} = 676.2 \text{ million US dollars.}$$

In addition, ecotourism contributes to job creation. In 2023, more than 7,600 jobs were created in the tourism industry of Kazakhstan, a significant part of which is related to ecotourism.

Thus, it can be revealed that ecotourism in Kazakhstan makes a significant contribution to the national economy, contributing to the creation of jobs and the development of related industries. In 2023, the total estimated economic impact of ecotourism amounted to about 676.2 million US dollars. This indicates the potential of ecotourism as a key pillar of sustainable regional development in Kazakhstan.

To gain a deeper understanding of how ecotourism balances economic growth and environmental protection, examples of successful practices from around the world are provided below. Table 1 shows the key success factors of ecotourism initiatives for each country.

Table 1 – Key success factors of ecotourism initiatives for each country

№	Country	Key factors
1	Costa Rica	Rich biodiversity, eco-infrastructure (eco-lodges, canopy tours), sustainability integration, global recognition as a nature destination.
2	Kenya	Wildlife reserves (Maasai Mara, Amboseli), community involvement (revenue-sharing, employment), conservation focus (endangered species), eco-certifications.
3	Iceland	Unique landscapes (volcanic terrains, glaciers), strict environmental regulations, low-impact tourism (hiking, birdwatching), global positioning as sustainable tourism leader.
4	Bhutan	High-value, low-impact policy (daily fees), controlled visitor numbers, cultural preservation, community funding for conservation.
5	Australia	Marine conservation (Great Barrier Reef), eco-certifications for tour operators, visitor education on marine protection, sustainable marine tourism.

Note: Compiled based on the sources [12–16].

1. Costa Rica has established itself as a world leader in the field of ecotourism, using its rich biological diversity and extensive network of protected areas. National parks, which occupy almost 25% of the country's territory, make a significant contribution to its economy. Initiatives such as eco-houses, canopic tours and biodiversity conservation programs not only improve the standard of living of local communities, but also support efforts to preserve the environment. Thanks to the introduction of environmentally friendly methods, Costa Rica attracts millions of tourists every year, while maintaining its reputation as one of the best places for nature lovers. This model has inspired other countries to prioritize ecotourism as a tool for sustainable development [12].

2. The ecotourism industry in Kenya is centered around its famous wildlife sanctuaries, including the Masai Mara and Amboseli National Parks. Ecotourism in Kenya not only helps to conserve endangered species such as lions, elephants and rhinos, but also directly benefits local Maasai communities through employment, income distribution and cultural exchange. The government and environmental organizations have implemented environmental certification and sustainable practices to minimize environmental impacts, making Kenya a global example of combining nature conservation with economic growth [13].

3. Iceland has successfully positioned itself as a leading ecotourism destination, leveraging its unique volcanic landscapes, glaciers and geothermal activity while preserving its fragile ecosystems. The country has strict environmental regulations, such as restricting access to vulnerable areas and encouraging the use of renewable energy sources in tourism infrastructure. With a focus on outdoor activities such as hiking, bird watching and geothermal baths, Iceland attracts environmentally conscious travelers by demonstrating how remote and delicate landscapes can be sustainably marketed on a global scale [14].

4. Bhutan is an example of a sustainable tourism model due to its “high value with minimal impact” policy. Tourists are required to pay a daily fee that supports local communities, environmental programs and sustainable tourism infrastructure. This approach limits the number of visitors, reducing the environmental burden and maximizing economic benefits. In the Bhutanese model, quality is placed above quantity, which ensures the preservation of the country’s rich cultural and natural heritage. It sets a global standard for ensuring a balance between environmental integrity and economic growth [15].

5. Australia’s ecotourism initiatives around the Great Barrier Reef demonstrate the successful integration of environmental conservation measures with a thriving tourism industry. Strict rules for diving and boating, combined with the environmental certification of tour operators, reduce the anthropogenic impact on the reef. Educational programs for visitors raise awareness of marine conservation, turning the Great Barrier Reef into a global example of sustainable marine tourism. This model demonstrates how a robust regulatory framework can protect marine ecosystems while supporting local economies [16].

These examples illustrate the potential of ecotourism in terms of harmonizing environmental protection with economic growth through the use of natural and cultural values. The main findings include:

- ◆ Strict rules and enforcement mechanisms are essential to protect ecosystems.
- ◆ The involvement of local communities ensures sustainable practices and equitable economic benefits.
- ◆ Prioritizing low-impact activities and high-quality tourism reduces environmental stress and improves visitor experiences.

By combining economic, environmental and social priorities, ecotourism can contribute to sustainable development by offering scalable and adaptable models for travel destinations around the world. As noted above, national parks are one of the key sites of ecotourism, so the following are 3 examples of national parks in which ecotourism has had an impact on economic growth and development, as well as a visual representation summarizing the consequences:

1. Kolsai Lakes National Park (Almaty region)

Economic impact: the development of ecotourism around the Kolsai Lakes has had a significant impact on the local economy, creating jobs and encouraging the development of small businesses in villages such as Saty. Locals have started offering eco-friendly housing, including yurts, as well as services such as excursions and horse riding. This made it possible for local entrepreneurs to earn money based on the natural resources of the park [17].

Multiplier effect: increased interest in ecotourism stimulated investments in infrastructure – improving roads, building guest houses and creating waste disposal systems. This process has made the park more accessible to tourists from both Kazakhstan and abroad.

Example: entrepreneur Aliya Temirova has opened guest houses-yurts, which not only popularize Kazakh culture, but also contribute to the development of the tourism sector.

2. Katon-Karagai National Park (East Kazakhstan region)

Economic effect: ecotourism in Katon Karagai contributes to economic growth by attracting tourists to remote and untouched natural areas. Seasonal tourism generates income, which has a

positive effect on the local economy. The development of ecotourism has also led to improvements in infrastructure, including visitor centers and hiking trails. The introduction of virtual tours has made it possible to attract tourists throughout the year.

Local employment: tourism provides seasonal employment for local residents working in hotels, travel services and guest houses. This stabilized the economy, which had previously been heavily dependent on agriculture [18].

Foreign partnerships: cooperation with international partners, including from Mongolia, has helped to attract foreign tourists and strengthen the local economy.

3. Ile-Alatau National Park (Almaty region)

Economic effect: The proximity of the park to Almaty, the largest city in Kazakhstan, has led to an increase in the number of tourists. This has stimulated investments in ecotourism infrastructure, including visitor centers, tourist facilities and environmentally friendly transportation.

Job creation: The development of ecotourism has opened up new jobs, including guides, hotel staff and park workers. Income from tourism is also used to maintain the park and implement environmental measures.

Public investments: As part of the support for ecotourism, the state has invested heavily in infrastructure projects such as tourist routes and environmentally friendly housing, which has strengthened the economic development of the region [19].

Below is a table 2 describing the economic consequences of ecotourism in the national parks of Kazakhstan, such as Kolsai Lakes, Katon-Karagai and Ile-Alatau.

Table 2 – Describes the economic consequences of ecotourism in these national parks

Region	The impact of ecotourism	Economic contribution
Kolsai Lakes	Local business (accommodation in yurts, excursions).	Job creation, investment in hotel infrastructure.
Katon Karagai	Seasonal employment, virtual tours.	Improving infrastructure, increasing the number of foreign visitors.
Ile-Alatau	Public investments, eco-friendly transport.	Infrastructure development, income from environmental protection measures.

Note: Compiled based on the sources [17–19].

The main ideas:

1. **Job creation:** Ecotourism opens up both direct and indirect employment opportunities in rural and remote areas of Kazakhstan.

2. **Infrastructure development:** Investments in environmentally sustainable infrastructure make nature parks more accessible and contribute to long-term economic growth.

3. **Popularization of culture:** Ecotourism promotes Kazakh culture by supporting local businesses that offer traditional entertainment such as living in yurts, which contributes to the diversification of the economy in the regions [20].

Further, the authors conducted a PESTEL analysis. A PESTEL analysis evaluates the macro-environmental factors that influence the development of ecotourism in Kazakhstan. The framework helps identify opportunities and challenges in the political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal dimensions (table 3) [21].

The analysis conducted by PESTEL shows that ecotourism in Kazakhstan benefits from strong government support, rich natural resources and opportunities for economic growth through public-private partnerships and international cooperation. However, in order to ensure sustainable development, problems such as inadequate infrastructure, limited public awareness and weak compliance with environmental standards must be addressed. The use of advanced technologies, the promotion of public engagement and the introduction of stricter standards of sustainable development are necessary to fully realize the potential of ecotourism in order to obtain economic and environmental benefits in the region.

Table 3 – PESTEL Analysis for Ecotourism Development in Kazakhstan

Political	Economic
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong support for tourism development is evident in national policies and investments, including master plans for national parks and financing initiatives. 2. Collaboration with global organizations (for example, UNDP) to introduce sustainable tourism practices. 3. Insufficient regulation and enforcement in certain areas, which leads to risks such as excessive tourism and environmental degradation. 	<p>Ecotourism has a significant contribution to the regional economy by creating jobs, attracting investment in infrastructure and increasing tourist spending.</p> <p>Public-private partnership and government plans to invest \$1.25 billion in ecotourism infrastructure by 2030.</p> <p>Regional economic differences and dependence on traditional industries may hinder the development of ecotourism in less developed regions.</p>
Social	Technological
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ecotourism empowers local communities by creating jobs, supporting small businesses, and promoting cultural heritage. 2. Opportunities to showcase traditional practices, such as living in yurts, strengthen national identity. 3. Limited awareness among local communities and tourists about the importance of sustainable tourism. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use of GIS mapping tools (e.g., “TABIGAT”) and virtual tours enhances accessibility and promotes ecotourism globally. 2. Advances in eco-friendly technologies for transportation, accommodation, and waste management. 3. Rural areas may lack access to digital tools and modern infrastructure necessary for effective tourism management.
Environmental	Legal
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ecotourism supports the preservation of unique ecosystems, wildlife, and natural resources. 2. Initiatives such as controlled waste disposal and low-impact tourism activities mitigate environmental risks. 3. Vulnerability to climate change and potential environmental degradation from poorly managed tourism. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Laws governing protected areas and ecotourism aim to balance environmental conservation with economic growth. 2. Weak enforcement of environmental and tourism regulations can lead to unsustainable practices. 3. Adopting global sustainable tourism standards can enhance competitiveness and attract foreign tourists.
Note: Compiled based on the source [21].	

Thus, ecotourism in Kazakhstan not only contributes to environmental protection, but also becomes a catalyst for economic development at the local and regional levels. However, despite the prospects, there are challenges and obstacles in this area. In order for ecotourism to fully realize its potential in regional development, it is necessary to solve a number of problems (figure 4) [22].

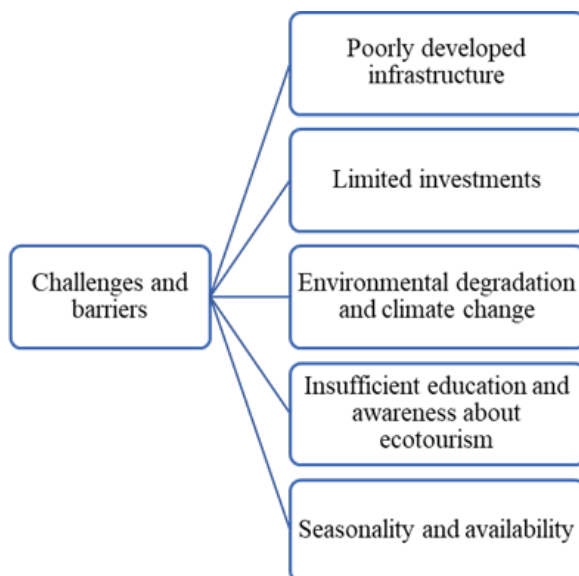


Figure 4 – Problems and barriers in the economic development of ecotourism

Note: Compiled based on the source [22].

Inadequate infrastructure, insufficient investments and environmental issues are the main challenges for the development of ecotourism in Kazakhstan, added to these are lack of awareness and problems associated with seasonality. Strategies must emphasize sustainability, stakeholder engagement, and necessary infrastructure upgrades to overcome these challenges and unleash the power of ecotourism to drive regional development.

Practical recommendations for economic development of regions on the basis of ecotourism:

- ◆ Creation and improvement of highways, public transport and connections to ecotourism sites, especially in remote areas. This includes creating sustainable routes and ensuring that the project is accessible throughout the winter season.

- ◆ Creation of a visitor center, an eco-lodge and a tent camp that will comply with the best practices of sustainable development. Improve facilities such as waste disposal systems, renewable energy sources, and alternative modes of transportation.

- ◆ To offer training programs for local residents to improve the skills of hospitality, guided tours and traditional crafts. This allows local communities to be active participants in the tourism economy.

- ◆ Develop income distribution models that enable local communities to directly benefit from ecotourism initiatives.

- ◆ To develop health tourism, conduct training seminars and engage in environmental volunteerism. Follow the rules of waste disposal to preserve soil quality and prevent the loss of fertile land.

- ◆ To encourage enterprises to obtain environmental certificates for those who adhere to the principles of sustainable development.

- ◆ Create interactive maps and virtual tours that can attract visitors and help reduce physical stress on natural sites.

- ◆ Development of digital platforms for booking ecotours, a form of alternative tourism that reduces the impact on local resources, providing income to local businesses, as well as training in these methods.

- ◆ Creation of marketing campaigns dedicated to the special natural and cultural aspects of different regions. Promote green initiatives to attract environmentally conscious travelers.

- ◆ Develop an action plan to eliminate gaps between key ecotourism areas and create a network of interconnected studios, trails, eco-houses, recreation areas and cultural values.

Thererecommendationsmade will help to increase the economic, social and environmental advantages of ecotourism while providing the framework for this long-term sustainable growth for the regions of Kazakhstan.

Consequently, the practical implications of ecotourism are linked to its role in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): this approach ensures that the conclusions made are substantiated and are consistent with study results.

Job creation and economic growth (SDG 8): The study quantifies more than 7.600 jobs created in 2023 as a result of ecotourism, especially in rural environments. This shows that it has a real role to play in tackling unemployment and diversifying local economies. Its total economic contribution of \$676.2 million generated by ecotourism also highlights ecotourism's potential to galvanize local economies.

Sustainable communities (SDG 11): Infrastructure development (e.g., eco-lodges and visitor centers) and the promotion of cultural heritage (e.g., yurts and traditional crafts) correlates with findings that ecotourism improves quality of life in rural areas. A special mention to local entrepreneurs the likes of Saty village resonate with the community-oriented component of this industry.

Environmental conservation (SDG 11): have ecotourism in protected areas, the Kolsai lakes and Katon Karagai national parks so the tourism revenue goes to the restoration of the area to protect biodiversity and prevent the uncontrolled number of visitors. The study notes that by raising awareness worldwide, virtual tours alleviate physical stressors on sensitive ecosystems.

By aligning and synthesizing these outcomes within its conclusions, the study unequivocally illustrates the transformative ability of ecotourism as an enabling mechanism for economic growth, cultural preservation, and environmental custodianship, whilst delivering a tangible and actionable pathway for Kazakhstan to realize its SDG commitments. By connecting the findings to well-known and well-catalogued outcomes, this establishes the conclusions and reinforces the findings with directly relevant findings and measurable effects.

Conclusion

In conclusion, ecotourism represents a transformative opportunity for sustainable regional development in Kazakhstan, aligning economic growth with environmental stewardship and cultural preservation. The country's vast natural landscapes and unique biological diversity create a solid foundation for positioning it as a leading ecotourism destination. However, significant challenges must be addressed to unlock this potential, including inadequate infrastructure, limited policy frameworks, and low public awareness of the benefits of ecotourism.

To ensure success, Kazakhstan must adopt a holistic approach, integrating sustainable tourism practices, improving infrastructure and strengthening partnerships between the public and private sectors. Promoting public engagement and education about the economic and environmental value of ecotourism will contribute to its further development. By prioritizing strategic initiatives in these areas, Kazakhstan can use ecotourism as a driving force for regional economic growth, environmental protection and cultural heritage, setting a global benchmark for sustainable development.

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ЭКОЛОГИЯЛЫҚ ТУРИЗМ ҚАЗАҚСТАН РЕСПУБЛИКАСЫНДАҒЫ ӨҢІРЛЕРДІҢ ЭКОНОМИКАЛЫҚ ДАМУ ФАКТОРЫ РЕТІНДЕ

Андатпа

Туристік индустрияның қарқынды дамып келе жатқан секторы болып табылатын экологиялық туризм Қазақстан Республикасының өңірлік дамуында маңызды рөл атқарады. Бұл мақалада қоршаған ортаны қорғау мен экономикалық даму арасындағы тепе-теңдікті қамтамасыз ету арқылы тұрақты аймақтық өсуді қамтамасыз ету үшін экологиялық туризмнің әлеуеті қарастырылады. Таулар, шөлдер, ормандар мен көлдерді қоса алғанда, кең және алуан түрлі табиғи ландшафттарының арқасында Қазақстан экотуризмнің жетекші бағытына айналуға барлық мүмкіндіктерге ие. Алайда, экотуризмді тиімді дамыту мұқият жоспарлауды, саяси қолдауды және жергілікті қауымдастықтың белсенді қатысуы қажет етеді. Бұл зерттеуде Қазақстанның әртүрлі өңірлеріндегі экологиялық туризмнің ағымдағы жай-күйі талданады, табысты бастамалар, сондай-ақ дамымаған аудандардың алдында тұрған проблемалар баяндалады. Мақалада экологиялық туризмнің жұмыс орындарын құруға, жергілікті инфрақұрылымды дамытуға, мәдени және табиғи мұраны сақтауға қалай ықпал ететіні қарастырылады. Зерттеу экологиялық туризмнің аймақтық дамуындағы рөлін арттырудың бірнеше негізгі факторларын анықтады, соның ішінде туристік инфрақұрылымды дамыту, жергілікті экологиялық таза өнімдерді ілгерілету, кадрлар даярлау және мемлекеттік-жекеменшік серіктестік орнату. Сонымен қатар, зерттеу қоршаған ортаның нашарлауы, инвестициялардың жетіспеушілігі және жергілікті қауымдастықтар мен туристердің экотуризмнің маңыздылығы туралы шектеулі хабардарлығы сияқты тұрақты туризм мәселелерін шешуге бағытталған.

Тірек сөздер: экологиялық туризм, аймақтық даму, тұрақты даму, экономикалық әсер, инфрақұрылым, жұмыс орындарын құру, табиғи аумақтар.

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ЭКОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ ТУРИЗМ КАК ФАКТОР ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОГО РАЗВИТИЯ РЕГИОНОВ В РЕСПУБЛИКЕ КАЗАХСТАН

Аннотация

Экологический туризм, быстро растущий сектор туристской индустрии, играет важную роль в региональном развитии Республики Казахстан. В данной статье рассматривается потенциал экологического туризма для обеспечения устойчивого регионального роста путем обеспечения баланса между охраной окружающей среды и экономическим развитием. Благодаря своим обширным и разнообразным природным ландшафтам, включая горы, пустыни, леса и озера, Казахстан имеет все шансы стать ведущим направлением экотуризма. Однако эффективное развитие экотуризма требует тщательного планирования, политической поддержки и активного участия местных сообществ. В данном исследовании анализируется текущее состояние экологического туризма в различных регионах Казахстана, освещаются как успешные инициативы, так и проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются слаборазвитые районы. В статье исследуется, как экологический туризм способствует созданию рабочих мест, развитию местной инфраструктуры и сохранению культурного и природного наследия. Исследование выявило несколько ключевых факторов для повышения роли экологического туризма в региональном развитии, включая развитие туристской инфраструктуры, продвижение местных экологически чистых продуктов, подготовку кадров и установление государственно-частного партнерства. Кроме того, исследование направлено на решение проблем устойчивого развития туризма, таких как ухудшение состояния окружающей среды, недостаток инвестиций и ограниченная осведомленность местных сообществ и туристов о важности экотуризма.

Ключевые слова: экологический туризм, региональное развитие, устойчивое развитие, экономический эффект, инфраструктура, создание рабочих мест, природные зоны.

Article submission date: 03.10.2024