



Article

Comprehensive Assessment of the Tourism Potential of the Bukhara Region within the Framework of the Sustainable Development Strategy

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Abstract: The article is devoted to a comprehensive assessment of the tourism potential of the Bukhara region within the framework of a sustainable development strategy. The study examines various approaches to defining and measuring tourism potential, analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of the regional tourism market, and identifies key factors influencing the development of the industry. Particular attention is paid to the quality of tourism services, professional training of personnel, and infrastructure development. It is noted that, despite external challenges, the region's tourism sector demonstrates positive dynamics, while existing problems can be addressed through the implementation of strategic programs, cluster development, and diversification of tourism offerings.

Keywords: Sustainable Economic Development, Regional Tourism Potential, Tourism, Sociological Survey, Integral Assessment

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1. Introduction

At present, the tourism industry is one of the most dynamically developing and progressive sectors of the global economy, while issues related to the expansion of sustainable tourism development in regions are becoming increasingly important for academic research [1]. According to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, around 1.4 billion tourists made international trips in 2024, which is 11 percent more than in 2023. This indicates that global tourism has recovered to 99 percent of its pre-pandemic level. In this context, the study of tourism development pathways at the regional level, as well as the improvement of priority areas and methods aimed at increasing the efficiency of using regional tourism potential, represents a relevant research problem and is regarded as an important instrument for achieving sustainable economic development [2], [3].

Tourism is a relevant and promising sector of the national economy in regions that possess tourism potential. As the tourism industry develops within a region, it becomes a driving force behind the growth of related sectors of the economy, small businesses, and the service sector, while simultaneously becoming an integral part of the socio-cultural life of the population. This process includes the creation of additional jobs, particularly for low-skilled workers and vulnerable groups of the population, the development of

infrastructure, the expansion of new facilities in the service sector, the diversification of educational programs, and the promotion of cultural exchange [4], [5], [6].

2. Methodology

Efforts aimed at developing the tourism potential of a region are carried out on a continuous basis and are refined with each new study, which in turn necessitates a thorough examination of the methodology for assessing regional tourism potential in the context of sustainable economic development. Various scholars approach the methodology for determining regional tourism potential through their own conceptual frameworks. Several of these approaches are considered below.

According to E.I. Bogdanov, the volume of tourism potential represents the maximum possible level of production and provision of tourism services given the existing volume and quality of available tourism resources, under conditions that ensure their most comprehensive utilization in terms of efficiency and time. This indicator determines the maximum possible return on tourism potential. The volume of realized tourism potential reflects the achieved level of its utilization and determines the actual return on tourism resources.

Assessing the productivity of using a region's tourism potential for tourism development purposes serves as an important factor in monitoring the potential of the tourism sector at the regional level. Accordingly, E.I. Bogdanov proposes expressing the index of efficiency of using the tourism potential of a territory (K_e) in the form of a ratio:

$$K_e = E_p / Z_p, (1)$$

where E_p denotes the effect obtained from the realization of the region's hospitality industry potential, and Z_p represents the expenditures required to achieve E_p .

In turn, E_p can be presented as a combination of two components. One component reflects the contribution of the tourism sector to addressing national and regional development challenges, while the other represents the recreational effect, defined as the difference between the state of tourism at the beginning and at the end of the tourism cycle. As for the required expenditures Z_p , they depend on the characteristics of specific measures aimed at realizing the potential and can be determined using methods commonly applied in practice to calculate the efficiency of large investment portfolios.

3. Results and Discussion

In her dissertation, G.A. Alimova presents an assessment of a region's recreational potential based on a survey conducted among recreationists and the local population of the studied territory [7]. An analysis of the survey results demonstrates that the development of tourism potential is influenced by the following factors:

1. Transport accessibility of tourism sites;
2. Qualifications of personnel employed in the tourism sector at the studied sites;
3. Diversity of the excursion offering, including the availability of various tours, excursions, and programs that enhance the attractiveness of the area;
4. Level of catering and food service establishments;
5. Level of service quality [8].

The survey method serves as an effective tool for identifying the current situation, as it is conducted among potential users of tourism services and tourism products, experts, as well as groups of individuals who have a direct or indirect connection to the issue under study [9], [10]. The survey conducted by G.A. Alimova identified existing problems, and through subsequent analysis, she developed specific recommendations for improving the situation, carried out a SWOT analysis, and provided its comprehensive characterization [11], [12].

E.S. Mitrofanova proposes implementing the key principles for conducting a rating-based assessment of the tourism and recreational attractiveness of individual territories (zones) within a region. She groups these principles into the following categories:

1. Combining methods for the selection and ranking of tourism and recreational territories (zones);
2. Integrating expert-based and statistical approaches in the process of conducting the rating assessment;
3. Constructing an integral indicator as a single criterion for identifying and ranking the most attractive tourism and recreational territories (zones);
4. Combining quantitative and qualitative assessments;
5. Applying aggregated ranking (assessment) methods for tourism and recreational territories (zones) in order to ensure simplicity, transparency, and accessibility for a broad range of specialists, top managers, business representatives, and other stakeholders.
6. The integral indicator in the methodology proposed by E.S. Mitrofanova предусматривает the inclusion of such elements as an indicator assessing the tourism and recreational potential of a destination and characterizing the conditions for utilizing the potential of territories. The element that evaluates the tourism and recreational potential of a destination plays a key role in determining the integral assessment, as it incorporates important indicators of regional tourism potential, including cultural and historical sites and natural and climatic resources [13].
7. A detailed analysis is conducted with consideration of the elements that constitute natural resources and cultural and historical resources. Depending on the number of such elements available within the studied territory, an appropriate score is assigned, and the value of the coefficient reflecting the significance of the territory's tourism potential is determined.
8. According to the author, the most objective and effective methods for assessing the tourism potential of a region are rating-based regional assessment through integral calculation and ranking, which was adopted as the foundation of E.S. Mitrofanova's approach, and the survey method proposed by G.A. Alimova.

In this study, the author applied an assessment of the tourism potential of the Bukhara region based on a sociological survey aimed at identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the regional tourism market. The respondents were distributed across the following groups: international and domestic tourists, as well as individuals having a direct or indirect connection to the tourism sector. At the time of the analysis, the total number of respondents amounted to 2,525 people, and the survey was conducted between May 2022 and October 2022 [14], [15].

The analysis of statistical indicators of the tourism sector in Uzbekistan, and in particular in the Bukhara region, demonstrated that efforts aimed at the development and expansion of tourism services in the Bukhara region have been showing positive dynamics, regardless of the decline in international tourist flows caused by the coronavirus pandemic. This progress has largely been achieved due to the measures implemented at the national level to support tourism development and entrepreneurial activity, as well as through the implementation of regional programs.

Factors influencing the development of a region's tourism potential may either facilitate or constrain tourism growth in specific territories. The existing tourism potential of the region is not being utilized to its full capacity. In our view, the negative factors present in the Bukhara region are not of a fundamental nature and can be addressed through the development and implementation of appropriate strategic programs, the establishment of a regional tourism cluster, the diversification of tourism services offered, and the development of service-sector infrastructure.

The sociological survey conducted by the authors to examine the tourism market in the Bukhara region revealed that improving the quality of tourism services and enhancing the professional qualifications of personnel employed in the tourism sector are key prerequisites for increasing the efficiency of utilizing the region's tourism potential.

The specialization of tourism activity is determined by the availability and condition of resources for tourism development. The Bukhara region possesses a high level of tourism potential; however, it faces typical challenges that are characteristic of many other regions of the country.

The specialization of a region in various types of tourism activity is shaped by the availability and condition of resources for tourism development within the given territory. In particular, due to its rich historical and cultural resources, the Bukhara region actively develops cultural and educational tourism. At the same time, the region remains narrowly specialized in tourism destinations based on the presence of a single dominant type of resource. Within the tourism industry, a specific form of interdisciplinary tourism can be observed, in which tourism in a particular area develops along multiple directions.

In her academic work, E.O. Ushakova proposed the following classification of types of tourism. She notes that there are two types of tourism groupings: basic and specialized. The basic types include educational, recreational, and health and wellness tourism. The specialized types include event tourism, business tourism, extreme tourism, ecotourism, cruise tourism, and adventure tourism. The development of basic types of tourism primarily requires the availability of natural and climatic as well as historical and cultural resources, which constitutes a characteristic feature of the tourism potential and attractiveness of the Bukhara region and represents a key element in the development of the regional tourism sector.

Alongside basic types of tourism, the Bukhara region possesses sufficient potential for the development of specialized types of tourism in order to diversify tourism offerings and increase the number of tourists arriving in the region. A well-designed regional tourism development strategy serves as a foundation for sustainable regional development. In this context, two important vectors of action should be identified: first, determining the long-term direction of the region's development, and second, forming effective pathways for the implementation of the planned initiatives.

In the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated September 28, 2022, No. 543, "On Measures for the Further Development of the Tourism Sector in the Bukhara Region for 2022–2026," a priority objective for regional tourism development is set to increase the number of tourists visiting the region to 6 million by 2026, while export revenues from tourism services are expected to reach 300 million US dollars.

To achieve these objectives, the document outlines a set of measures that are intended to ensure their phased implementation. Based on analytical assessments, academic research, and developed methodologies for determining regional tourism potential, the author has formulated a number of proposals that are expected to make an active contribution to the further development of tourism in the Bukhara region, as well as to the tourism sector of the Republic of Uzbekistan as a whole.

4. Conclusion

In order to preserve and ensure the proper use of existing historical and cultural sites in the Bukhara region, we propose a set of scientifically grounded measures for the conservation of historical architectural objects. These proposals are based on the author's analysis of international best practices, expert opinions obtained through sociological surveys, and a review of specialized literature. We recommend that the relevant responsible authorities preserve cultural heritage in its original form, as it has been

transmitted to the present day, with the exception of permitted conservation measures aimed solely at preventing further deterioration and destruction.

Cultural heritage is intended not only to convey the legacy of our ancestors, but also to contribute to the development of public education, national culture and art, science, and enlightenment. At present, this issue remains highly relevant for all cultural heritage sites, as similar “unqualified” restoration practices are being carried out throughout the country, including in the Bukhara region. Many sites are brought to an idealized, “polished,” and new condition, which results in the loss of their original character and distinctive features, making buildings increasingly similar to one another. As a consequence, monuments, mosques, madrasahs, and minarets across different regions of Uzbekistan begin to resemble each other. This situation arises from inadequately conducted restoration works, in which historic buildings are effectively reconstructed rather than carefully conserved.

The development of regional tourism represents a promising sector of the economy, as the tourism industry stimulates the growth of related economic sectors and generates a significant multiplier effect, which in turn makes a substantial contribution to the gross regional product.

Overall, extensive efforts have been undertaken in the country to develop the tourism sector. These efforts include not only the restoration of cultural heritage sites, but also the construction of hotels and accommodation facilities, the development of road infrastructure, the training of tourism professionals, and the active promotion of Uzbekistan on the global stage. The recommendations outlined above will enable Uzbekistan to strengthen its position in the international arena and become a competitive destination in the tourism sector among the leading countries in this field.

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