



THE NATURAL TOURIST RESOURCES OF KASHKADARYA PROVINCE: REGIONAL POTENTIAL AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS

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Abstract. *This article analyses the unique natural-geographical location of Kashkadarya Province as a fundamental factor in ensuring regional economic stability. The recreational potential of the Hisar Range and the scientific and tourist appeal of the Kitab State Geological Reserve were comparatively studied during the research. Statistical data evidence the existing imbalances in the region's infrastructure. The concluding section offers practical proposals for creating the province's "ecological brand" and aligning service quality with international standards.*

Keywords: *Kashkadarya, natural resources, Hisar Range, ecotourism, infrastructure index, recreation, sustainable development.*

Introduction. In the modern economy, the tourism sector is recognized not only as a leisure industry but also as a strategic driver of national economic diversification [1]. Globally, the shift in tourist flows from anthropogenic areas to natural landscapes, i.e., ecological destinations, creates vast opportunities for regions rich in ecosystems, such as Kashkadarya [2]. The tourism policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in recent years has also been aimed at the effective use of regional potential [3].

The Kashkadarya region is distinguished by its diverse climatic conditions and unique ecosystem. There is an opportunity to develop more than ten promising types of tourism (trekking, mountaineering, agritourism, etc.) across a wide range of landscapes, from high mountain peaks in the eastern regions to hills and plains [4]. Despite the breadth of the resource base, systemic shortcomings persist in the mechanisms for converting these resources into tangible economic benefits. This study aims to scientifically substantiate the mismatch between available resources and the achieved results.

Research methodology. Quantitative and qualitative analysis methods for the assessment of the regional economy were used in the preparation of the article. The empirical data are based on reports from the Statistics Agency under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the regional sectoral departments [6]. In addition, international experience and theoretical concepts of managing tourism in mountainous areas were studied [7]. Using the SWOT analysis method, the strengths and weaknesses of the region's tourism were systematised, particularly regarding transport logistics and service levels at facilities.





Results. Although the dynamics of the regional tourism sector are positive, a structural imbalance is evident, with growth driven mainly by pilgrimage tourism.

Table 1.

Indicator name	Quantity(units)	Development level
Total hotels and guest houses	94	Satisfactory
Number of available beds	8 503	Low
Annual foreign tourist arrivals	48 000+	Medium
Number of ecological routes	12	Low

Analysis of the regional tourism sector's state at the beginning of 2024⁸

Analyses have shown that the majority of the 94 accommodation facilities in the region are concentrated in the administrative centres of Shahrisabz and Karshi [9]. In the mountainous areas (Hisorak, G'elon, the Lake villages), the number of guest houses does not correspond to the existing recreational potential. Yet it is precisely these areas that possess all the natural and climatic conditions to become an ecotourism centre. According to 2024 data, the demand for mountain tourism has increased by 14 per cent compared to the previous year, but communication and road infrastructure are not allowing this demand to be fully met [10].

Discussion. Relying solely on historical and cultural heritage in the tourism strategy for Kashkadarya Province may not yield the expected economic results. International experience (in the case of Switzerland, Austria and neighboring Kyrgyzstan) proves that mountain landscapes are a stable source of income [8]. Objects such as the Kitob State Geological Reserve are not only recreational sites but also hold the status of a ‘unique open-air laboratory’ for the international scientific community [5].

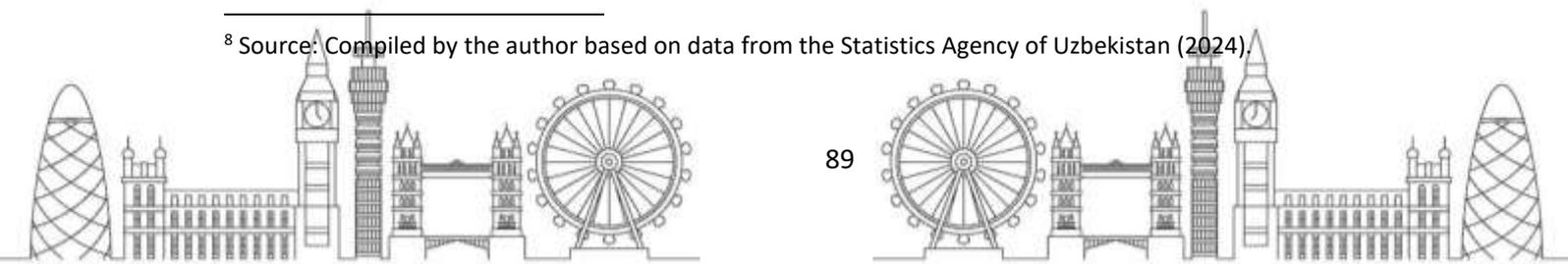
Proposed priority areas:

— Infrastructure modernisation: repair roads leading to mountain villages to international standards and ensure high-speed internet coverage.

— Minimising seasonality: Extending the tourist season by establishing winter tourism clusters (suspended cableways, ski bases). Human capital development: Establish short-term training courses in tourism management and foreign languages for residents of remote areas.

In conclusion, the natural resources of the Kashkadarya region can be likened to an “untapped gem”. The synergy of state investment and private sector initiatives will transform the region into Uzbekistan's leading ecotourism hub. This, in turn, will contribute to the preservation of the regional ecosystem alongside economic growth.

⁸ Source: Compiled by the author based on data from the Statistics Agency of Uzbekistan (2024).





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