

ECOTOURISM: A KEY FACTOR IN ENHANCING UZBEKISTAN'S INTERNATIONAL IMAGE

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Annotation

The article considers ecological tourism as an important factor in improving the international image of Uzbekistan. Issues of integration of Uzbekistan into the world community, strengthening of intercultural communication, further improvement of the information communication system and its impact on the development of ecological tourism were considered. The need for integration of international and national ecological tourism organizations is shown in the rise of the international image of Uzbekistan.

Key words: International image, national tourism, ecological tourism, integration, intercultural communication, information communication system, integration processes in the field of ecotourism.

In today's world, as Uzbekistan increasingly integrates into the global community, great importance is placed on enhancing its international image and promoting national tourism in this process. Ecotourism plays a significant role in the development of tourism. Each nation and ethnicity worldwide has its own image and representation, and when depicting the Uzbek people, emphasis is placed on their love for nature, diligence, hospitality, wisdom, and affection for children. The attitudes of visitors and tourists to the country are crucial in shaping the international image and perception of a country and its people. The role and importance of mass media in shaping Uzbekistan's international image is growing. In Uzbekistan, electronic publications, new websites, blogs, and social media sites are expanding, helping to shape the country's international image. Great attention is being paid to promoting Uzbekistan's opportunities in ecotourism in social networks and mass

media. Protecting nature and the environment, which is the main object of ecotourism, has become one of the most pressing issues today. Today, ecotourism in Uzbekistan is developing in close connection with a number of types of national tourism, including recreational tourism, health-improving tourism, leisure tourism, excursion tourism, adventure tourism, exotic tourism, extreme tourism, safari tourism, agro-tourism, and others. These types of tourism are of great interest not only to domestic tourists in Uzbekistan but also to foreign tourists from abroad. As President Shavkat Mirziyoyev noted, "Uzbekistan is a state with great potential in the field of tourism. There are more than 7,300 cultural heritage sites in our country, most of which are included in the UNESCO list. At the same time, by using the unique nature and beautiful recreation areas of our country, it is possible to open new tourist destinations. By actively involving global brands in this area, we need to pay special attention to the development of pilgrimage tourism, ecological, educational, ethnographic, gastronomic tourism, and other branches of this field. In this regard, we must take into account that the use of public-private partnership relations opens up great opportunities for the development of the industry.". The Japan Times, in an article titled "National Policy and Trade Relations are Developing Steadily," also provided information on the development of tourism in Uzbekistan and its ecotourism potential. "Uzbekistan has great tourism potential and a rich cultural and historical heritage," the article stated. "This land combines valleys surrounded by majestic mountains and scorching deserts, historical complexes famous for their ancient architectural monuments, and modern megacities in a wonderful way. Uzbekistan has 11 national natural parks and state reserves, 12 special reserves, 106 museums, 37 theaters, and 187 cultural and recreation parks."

"...In 2018, Uzbek national cuisine took first place in the "Gastronomic Tourism" nomination of National Geographic magazine. Uzbekistan is recognized by many foreign publications, including The New York Times, The Guardian, and Lovely Planet, as the most attractive and interesting destination for travel."

Tourism's role and importance as a benchmark for Uzbekistan's image is growing. According to British Professor S. Akiner, "tourism is one of the industries through which the national image can be developed because it brings foreigners into direct contact with the local population. As a result, these tourists form their own personal impressions of the societies they visit." According to British scientist S. Anholt, management, exports, tourism, culture and heritage, investment and immigration, and people play an important role in the process of strengthening a country's image, along with mass media.

Broadly promoting Uzbekistan's opportunities and achievements in ecotourism in influential foreign mass media, as well as through foreign PR agencies that promote Uzbekistan's positive image in the international arena, will positively affect the number of tourists coming to our country. The international relations of the Uzbek mass media play an important role in strengthening the image of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the international arena and are of great importance in promoting the ecotourism opportunities of our country. As an annex to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated January 5, 2019, No. PF-5611, the "Concept for the Development of the Tourism Industry in the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2019-2025" is presented, and according to this Concept, the Republic of Uzbekistan has diverse and attractive tourism products in different seasons that are competitive, including the creation of thematic tourist zones and clusters in the territories of the country, and taking into account promising types of tourism (pilgrimage, educational, ecological, ethnographic, gastronomic, sports, health-improving, rural, industrial, business, etc.), the development of new tourism programs is planned.

In order to form the necessary ecotourism infrastructure in Uzbekistan, equipment, mechanisms and spare parts for the construction, reconstruction and equipping of cable cars, ski lifts, funiculars and other similar facilities and structures, as well as hot air balloons, motorboats and ATVs are exempted from customs duties according to the lists approved in the prescribed manner.

The development of ecotourism in Uzbekistan is carried out on the basis of strengthening ecotourism science, education, upbringing, and promotion. To this end, it is necessary to provide more information on ecotourism in the mass media and on the Internet in order to raise the environmental awareness and culture of the population, and to further increase the number of popular scientific and popular publications dedicated to ecotourism.

It is required to systematically develop ecotourism, form the necessary infrastructure, organize tourism and recreational free economic zones, and organize and expand the activities of innovative clusters. The implementation of such measures will lead to an increase in the image of Uzbekistan in the field of tourism in the international arena and an increase in the interest of foreign tourists in the ecotourism opportunities of our country.

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