
"Exploring the Potential of Rural Tourism Development: A Case Study of Ovjazsoy in the Tashkent Region, Uzbekistan"

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Abstract: This research paper aims to explore the potential of rural tourism development in the context of Ovjazsoy, a rural area located in the Tashkent region. The study will use a qualitative research approach, including interviews with local residents, tourism experts, and government officials to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the area's current tourism industry. The research will also analyze the challenges faced by the community in developing rural tourism and propose potential solutions to overcome them. This study will contribute to the growing body of literature on rural tourism development and provide insights for policymakers, local communities, and tourism stakeholders on how to enhance the potential of rural tourism in Ovjazsoy.

Key words: rural tourism, Ovjazsoy, community development, tourism stakeholders, local residents, government officials, challenges, potential solutions, tourism industry.

Introduction

Rural tourism has a high potential to stimulate local economic growth and social change because of its complementarity with other economic activities, its contribution to GDP and job creation, and its capacity to promote the dispersal of demand in time (fight seasonality) and along a wider territory¹.

Today, the main problem of the peoples of the world is a pandemic. The pandemic has led to a change in the basic concept of tourism. That is, if potential tourists plan to travel in their free time, when they have additional funds. This was the theory of tourism. But, during a pandemic, traveling to nature is considered the best way to protect yourself from the consequences of a pandemic and improve your health.

In particular, the global tourism policy is aimed at rebuilding tourism by providing people with

¹ <https://www.unwto.org/rural-tourism>

safe virus protection. At the same time, much attention is paid to agrotourism, rural tourism, which are areas of ecological tourism.

In addition, the state conducts an effective policy for the development of these types of tourism in Uzbekistan. "Tourist villages" have been created in almost all corners of Uzbekistan, and they all have their own advantages in the.

Rural tourism focuses on actively participating in a rural lifestyle. It can be a variant of ecotourism². The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the wellbeing of local people"³. Many villages can facilitate tourism because many villagers are hospitable and eager to welcome (and sometime even host) visitors. Agriculture is becoming highly mechanized and therefore, requires less manual labor. This trend is causing economic pressure on some villages, which in turn causes young people to move to urban areas. There is however, a segment of the urban population that is interested in visiting the rural areas and understanding the lifestyle. Rural tourism is carried out in the following cases:

- in rural areas it is carried out according to family traditions, regardless how much it costs;
- to improve the health in rural climatic conditions according to the doctor's advice;
- to spend more time in fresh air;
- Eating environmentally fresh and cheap products;
- availability of opportunities for gaining experience in agriculture;
- to communicate with other social groups, to get acquainted with their culture, traditions, to participate in their holidays and games. Vacation in the village is the removal of fatigue accumulated in the city for years, fresh air, environmentally friendly food, climate change, not dense population, other procedures and living culture, gardening, stockbreeding, nature conservation, and the cheapest holiday. According to its character, this type of tourism is one of the forms of ecological tourism. Tourists are likely to set up a family home in a farmer's home, allowing tourists to become familiar with rural life and new people there, to work with their traditions and agricultural practices.

Obviously, it creates inconvenience for homeowners, but brings more money and innovation to them. Tourists are provided with one or more special rooms and all necessary things. Both state and farmers benefit from such tourism. In this regard, rural tourism can be considered as a convenient and attractive tourism type. One of the positive aspects of rural tourism is that it is possible to provide employment in rural areas. For the first time this field does not require labor, the majority of farmers and their family members do the work, but later, as a result of profits from this industry, it will be possible to offer other types of services. Rural tourism can be divided into the following types⁴:

- Agro-tourism (harvesting);
- Accommodation in the village ("living in the village");
- Practice experience (experience of life);
- Gastronomic Excursions (Traditional Dishes and Drinks);
- Sport tourism (hiking, horseback riding, biking);
- Community ecotourism (ecological community tourism);

² "Rural Tourism". February, 2008. USDA Cooperative State, Education and Extension Service. Retrieved December 30, 2008

³ The International Ecotourism Society, 2014. [Electronic Resource]. URL: <http://www.ecotourism.org/> (date of access: 28.06.2019).

⁴ Allayarov S.F "The definition of rural tourism and its features" Faculty of tourism and economics, Urgench State University, Khorezm, Republic of Uzbekistan, Middle-East J. Sci. Res., 14 (5): 720-728, 2013

- Ethnographic tourism (acquaintance with local traditions). The benefits of tourism for the farming business include:
- Getting more income;
- Encourage your home arrangement;
- Perform creative work of adult family members;
- Friendly relationships with tourists to deal with a variety of problems with children (vacation in cities, help with university studies, sales of auxiliary products, etc.);
- Decreasing the criminal situation through increasing the cultural level of the population in the future.

Ovjazsoy village is located in Sanam district of Tashkent region of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The village area is located in the spruce area. Today, 300 farms and 1,624 people live in Ovjazsoy village, which belongs to Sanam district. The area is 1,200 hectares. The people of the region make a living through domestic animal, farming and gardening.

The upper part of the village is very suitable for ecotourism (horse, camel and hiking along the mountain slopes), but it is also possible to set up an agrotourism route, for example: beekeeping, horticulture (walnut, almond, mountain pistachio and apple), livestock (goat, roe deer, cattle and deer).

According to a study conducted by professors of the Department of Tourism and Service of the Tashkent State University of Economics, the village of Ovjazsoy is the most suitable candidate for inclusion in the list of "Best tourism vilage" published by the UNWTO.

Literature review

Rural tourism has gained increasing attention from researchers, policymakers, and tourism stakeholders in recent years due to its potential to promote sustainable economic development, preserve cultural heritage, and enhance the quality of life of rural communities. Numerous studies have explored the factors that contribute to successful rural tourism development, including community involvement, stakeholder collaboration, infrastructure development, marketing strategies, and the preservation of natural and cultural resources.

M. Nilzam Aly*, Rahmat Yuliawan, Upik Dyah Eka Noviyanti (2019) have focused on introducing the reforms of the public sector and their relevance to rural tourism and discusses the process impacts of the regional regulations towards rural tourism in East Java Province to the current time.

Wijijayanti, Trisetia, et al. (2020) have examined how rural tourism can be a potential sector for the development of both urban and rural areas. It explains how tourism destinations in rural environments can help in communities' empowerment and lead to sustainable local economic development. The development of rural tourism destinations is based on the villages' potential as a tourism product attribute, and the community becomes an active part of tourism products.

Ai Zhang, Yuqi Yang, et al. (2019) emphasize that the development and growth of rural tourism in China should not only consider the balance between regions, but also the influence of both natural factors and human factors.

In the context of Uzbekistan, rural tourism is a relatively new concept that has yet to be fully explored. However, the country's rich cultural heritage, diverse landscapes, and traditional lifestyle offer great potential for the development of rural tourism. Studies have shown that successful rural tourism development in Uzbekistan requires the involvement of local communities, the preservation of cultural heritage, and the development of infrastructure and marketing strategies.

The case study of Ovjazsoy in the Tashkent region provides a unique opportunity to explore the potential of rural tourism development in Uzbekistan. Ovjazsoy is a rural area that has yet to fully

tap into its potential for tourism development. The case study will examine the strengths and weaknesses of the area's current tourism industry and identify the challenges faced by the community in developing rural tourism. The study will also propose potential solutions to overcome these challenges and enhance the potential of rural tourism in Ovjazsoy.

Research Methodology

This research paper will use a qualitative research approach to explore the potential of rural tourism development in Ovjazsoy, a rural area located in the Tashkent region of Uzbekistan. The study will employ a case study design, which involves collecting data from multiple sources, including interviews with local residents, tourism experts, and government officials.

The data collection will be conducted in two phases. In the first phase, the researcher will conduct a review of relevant literature on rural tourism development and identify the key factors that contribute to successful rural tourism. In the second phase, the researcher will conduct semi-structured interviews with key informants, including local residents, tourism stakeholders, and government officials, to collect data on the current state of rural tourism in Ovjazsoy, its potential for development, and the challenges faced by the community in developing rural tourism.

The collected data will be analyzed using thematic analysis, which involves identifying themes and patterns in the data. The findings of the study will be presented using descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis. The study will also provide recommendations for policymakers, local communities, and tourism stakeholders on how to enhance the potential of rural tourism in Ovjazsoy.

The importance of rural tourism development in Uzbekistan

Rural tourism plays an important role on the tourism development of our country. European rural tourism shows that these countries entered the development of rural tourism more than 50 years ago. That is why the first place in the world of rural tourism development is the international model of the rural tourism development of the French countryside, the UK model, the German model and the Italian model of rural development. Which of the models for rural tourism development in Uzbekistan now is more memorable and more convenient? When we examine the structure and operation of these models, the application of them to the development of rural tourism does not create any problems. Because the diversity of the main resource and tourist resources for the development of rural tourism is higher than in the above-mentioned European countries. The main problem of rural tourism development in our country is that we have not yet understood the purpose of rural tourism⁵.



Figure 1. A wide defined concept of rural tourism

⁵ Bulletin of Science and Practice (scientific journal) T. 4. №4. 2018 г. <http://www.bulletennauki.com> 227

When assessing the ecosystem of the village "Ovjazsoy", the advantage is that the share of the animal world is high, the influence of natural, human factors is very low, nature is completely preserved. The state of the rural infrastructure, the roads are in excellent condition, 100% natural food, the availability of national accommodation facilities, the temperature is very convenient 22-24 C+ in summer.

There are enough opportunities for organizing new types of tourism in the village of Ovjazsoy. The natural conservation of the village's natural tourist resources may be of interest to many potential customers during a pandemic. In this case, an effective direction for the village can be:

Firstly, there are opportunities for the development of hunting tourism in the village, a number of types of forest tourism. Tourists can simultaneously get acquainted with the wildlife and experience the lifestyle of local residents.

The climate of the village, the air temperature, wide wild pine forests allow the development of medical tourism and recreational tourism in the village as well. Ovjazsoy village, which we offer, fully meets the requirements of the Best tourism villages program announced by UNWTO. This is evidenced by the fact that the rural ecosystem is naturally preserved, agrotourism resources (orchards), the rural population has its own ethnic culture, which distinguishes it from other regions.

"Four S" Strategy for Development Rural Tourism in Ovjazsoy Village

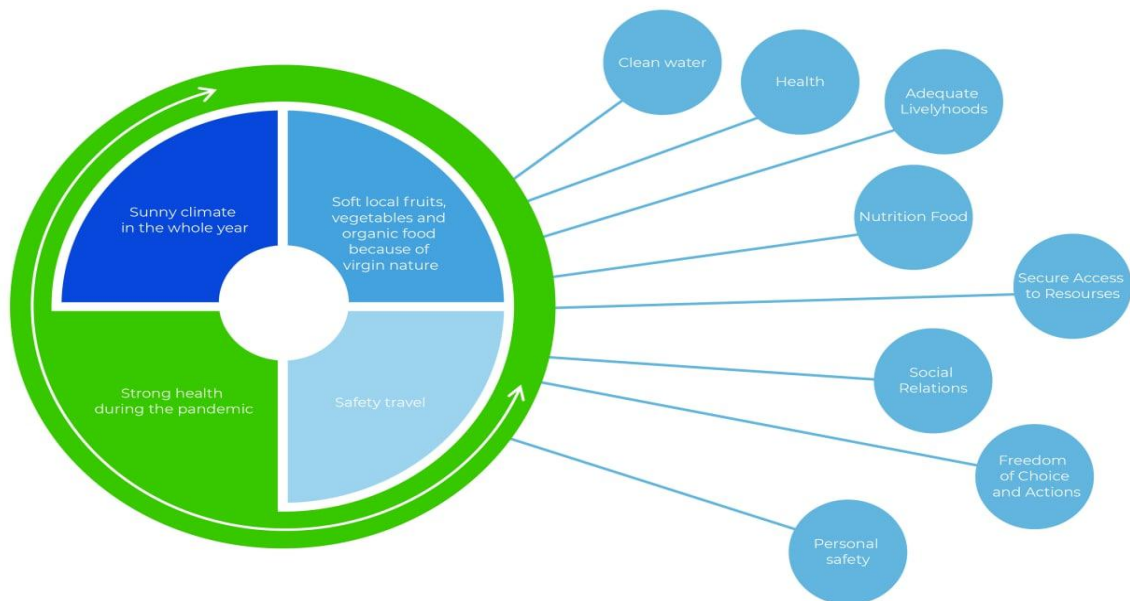


Figure 2. "Four S" Strategy for Development Rural Tourism in Ovjazsoy Village

The strategy we propose will control the proper use of all the natural resources of the village, ensuring that tourism development is managed by controlling the negative impact on the natural environment. Coordinates rural ecological resources (through the establishment of nature reserves, reservations, national parks) through the organization of ecological tourism. The development of tourism has a positive impact on the incomes of the rural population, economic development in rural areas.

Conclusion

The strategy of supporting rural tourism in developing countries is based on the diversification of the rural economy. Tourism agriculture (in protected natural areas) is promoted as a new activity, which increases the value of the region, its traditional production and processing methods and

cultural heritage to a certain extent. While support for rural tourism is aimed at finding new sources of growth and direct local employment opportunities, small-scale agriculture faces increasing constraints. It is necessary to define areas such as the location and creation of new infrastructure, road infrastructure that provides access to the destination from the main residential areas or tourist arrival points, ensuring their delivery to the destination or developing waste management services.

The research on exploring the potential of rural tourism development in Ovjazsoy, Tashkent region, Uzbekistan, concludes that rural tourism can be a significant contributor to the economic development of rural areas. The study found that Ovjazsoy has unique characteristics and potential tourist destinations that can be developed sustainably. The community's active involvement in tourism activities was found to be crucial for the success of rural tourism. The study recommends the development of a strategic plan that takes into account the social, economic, environmental, and community aspects of rural tourism development. Overall, the research highlights the potential of rural tourism development in contributing to the economic growth of rural areas and empowering local communities.

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