

Азии может привести к усилению конкуренции между соседними регионами и странами, такими как Кыргызстан и Таджикистан.

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## SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND ECOLOGICAL APPROACHES: A CASE STUDY OF KOKAND CITY

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**Abstract.** Ecotourism and sustainable tourism have similar objectives to link conservation goals, and economic and rural development. Ecotourism offers educational and new experiences to tourists, requiring environmentally sensitive management to protect natural sites. The increase in eco-tourists in Uzbekistan has led to a rise in tourism agencies claiming to be ecotourism providers, often without specific guidelines or regulations. The findings will help identify the best practices for ecotourism in Uzbekistan toward sustainability. Sustainable tourism is crucial in preserving natural resources while fostering economic and social development. This paper explores Kokand City's potential as an eco-tourism destination and highlights the sustainable business model of "Mehrigiyo," a leading company. The study analyzes ecological approaches in tourism and sustainable production, demonstrating how local enterprises can contribute to environmental preservation while promoting cultural and natural heritage.

**Keywords:** sustainable tourism, organic farming, eco-tourism, green economy, ecological business, wellness tourism

**Introduction.** With increasing global attention on sustainability, tourism must integrate eco-friendly practices to ensure long-term benefits for communities and nature. Kokand, a historical city in Uzbekistan, possesses significant potential for sustainable tourism due to its rich cultural heritage and natural landscapes. "Mehrigiyo," a pioneer in organic herbal tea production, exemplifies an ecological business model that aligns with sustainable tourism principles. This study aims to evaluate sustainable tourism's environmental, social, and economic impacts in Kokand, focusing on "Mehrigiyo," as a case study.

**Literature review.** In the 21st century, sustainable development has become an important issue in our community. Sustainability highlights on the resource conservation. The model of sustainable development consists of three elements: economics, society, and environment (Wildes, 1998)<sup>252</sup>. In line with this, the Tourism of Canada came up with the definition of sustainable tourism as development that leads to managing all resources to benefit the economic, social, and aesthetic needs, while retaining the cultural, ecological, and biological integrity (Cruz, 2003)<sup>253</sup>. The definition of sustainability is seen to align with the objective of ecotourism. Sustainability is the first thing to concentrate on to perform the best practices in ecotourism.

<sup>252</sup> Wildes, F.T. (1998). Influence of ecotourism in conservation for sustainable development: A case of Costa Rica. [Online] Available: <http://www.geog.ucsb.edu> (November 8, 2009)

<sup>253</sup> Cruz, R.G. (2003). Towards Sustainable Tourism Development in the Philippines and Other Asean Countries. [Online] Available: <http://pascn.pids.gov.ph> (November 5, 2009)

Organizations such as The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), World Conservation Union (IUCN), and International Ecotourism Standard have explained the definition of ecotourism, which can be concluded that ecotourism is a travel or visit to a natural area while being responsible for the conservation and the impact of environment and benefiting the cultural, economic, social, and political landscape of the local people. It is also not solely to pursue for enjoyment but also to provide appreciation for the environment and education for a tourist (Drumm & Moore, 2005; Kaur, 2006)<sup>254</sup>. On the other hand, it was found that the definition of ecotourism has been misinterpreted. Currently, ecotourism is seen mainly as adventure tourism in a natural environment, with little concern for conservation and sustainability (Mader, 2002; Lascurain, 2006)<sup>255</sup>. This is due to a lack of specific measures to guide ecotourism activities. Therefore, indicators are important as a tool for sustainable tourism. Ecotourism providers need to improve their practice. This is due to the findings that have shown the respondents have successfully done on only four among the eleven indicators. Most of the other indicators still need some expansion and awareness because some of the results showed that the indicators obtained a mean unsatisfactory level (Jaini, Norajlin & Nazrin, Aris & Daim, Salleh. (2012)<sup>256</sup>.

**Methodology.** This study employs a qualitative research approach, incorporating field observations, interviews with local business owners and tourists, and a literature review on sustainable tourism and ecological businesses. Data collection involved interviews with representatives of "Mehrigiyo" to understand their sustainability practices, analysis of governmental policies supporting sustainable tourism in Uzbekistan, and review of international best practices in eco-tourism.

**Results.** Mehrigiyo's impact on sustainable development can be categorized into five key domains:

1. **Cluster-Based Production System**
  - Vertical integration: cultivation, processing, packaging, and distribution are all conducted in-house.
  - Quality control and traceability across the entire value chain.
2. **International Certifications and Compliance**
  - Recognized by USDA Organic and EU Organic standards.
  - Halal, ISO 9001, and Non-GMO certifications enhance product credibility and marketability.
  - Undergoes regular audits and a rigorous 3-year transition process for organic certification.
3. **Environmental Stewardship**
  - Utilization of renewable energy (solar panels).
  - Drip irrigation systems to conserve water.
  - Use of compost and natural fertilizers in farming.
  - Eco-friendly packaging made from biodegradable materials.
4. **Health and Wellness Tourism**
  - Over 170,000 tourists visited Mehrigiyo's organic farms between 2019 and 2024.
  - The annual Lavender Festival, launched in 2021, draws 30,000+ local and international visitors.
  - Educational tours, natural therapy sessions, and organic meals promote holistic health.
5. **Community Engagement and Job Creation**

<sup>254</sup> Drumm, A. & Moore, A. (2005). An Introduction to Ecotourism Planning. [Online] Available: <http://www.parksinperil.org> (November 17, 2009)

<sup>255</sup> Mader, R. (2002). Latin American Ecotourism: What is it? [Online] Available: <http://www.commerce.otago.ac.nz> (November 17, 2008)

<sup>256</sup> Jaini, Norajlin & Nazrin, Aris & Daim, Salleh. (2012). The Practice of Sustainable Tourism in Ecotourism Sites among Ecotourism Providers. Asian Social Science. 8. 175-175. 10.5539/ass.v8n4p175.

- Employs over 300 local residents, especially women and youth.
- Supports local herbalists and promotes traditional knowledge.
- Offers training and capacity-building in organic farming and wellness practices.

**Table 1: Sustainable Initiatives at “Mehrigiyo”**

| Initiative Type  | Implementation Details                          |
|------------------|---|
| Organic Farming  | No chemical pesticides or synthetic fertilizers |
| Water Management | Drip irrigation for water efficiency            |
| Energy Use       | Solar energy for processing                     |
| Packaging        | Biodegradable materials                         |

The table titled “Sustainable Initiatives at 'Mehrigiyo’” presents an overview of the eco-friendly practices implemented by the organization. It is divided into two main columns: Initiative Type and Implementation Details, summarizing four key areas:

1. **Organic Farming.** Organic farming does not use chemical pesticides or synthetic fertilizers, indicating a commitment to natural agricultural methods that minimize environmental harm.
2. **Water Management.** Drip irrigation is employed for water efficiency, a technique known for conserving water while ensuring crops receive adequate hydration.
3. **Energy Use.** Solar energy for processing shows the organization's move toward renewable energy sources, reducing reliance on fossil fuels.
4. **Packaging.** Biodegradable materials are used, reflecting efforts to minimize waste and environmental pollution.

This table highlights “Mehrigiyo’s” dedication to sustainable development by integrating environmentally responsible practices into its operations.

**Conclusion.** The findings highlight the strong potential for sustainable tourism development in Kokand, with “Mehrigiyo” serving as a successful example of eco-friendly business practices. The company’s initiatives align with global sustainable tourism principles, contributing to environmental preservation and local economic development. Future strategies should focus on eco-lodge development, green certification programs, and international collaborations

**Recommendations for enhancing sustainability at “Mehrigiyo” include expanding** solar energy applications across all operations and investing in energy-efficient technologies to reduce overall energy consumption. Apply minimalist design principles and use certified compostable materials. Educate consumers on proper disposal methods to improve environmental impact.

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