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PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF SUSTAINABLE ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research. In this research work, considering the previous research works, it is proposed to identify and group the common problems encountered during the development of ecotourism and future development prospects.

Methodology. In the conduct of this literature review, the aim of the research work was determined and its main tasks were formed. Research questions were formed based on the study goals, and papers from Scopus and Science Direct sources were reviewed based on the keywords composing the research questions. Articles from 2017 to 2022 were evaluated for relevance to the study topic using the BULIN OR/AND operators. Furthermore, materials were gathered through publications written by domestic scholars, books, and government websites.

Originality / value of the research. In the course of the study, the authors, based on the goals of the state program for the development of tourism in Kazakhstan for 2019-2025, reviewed and analyzed the problems that countries face in the development of ecotourism, and combined the most common problems. At the same time, as a result of the review work, the positive impact of ecotourism on the state and development prospects was determined.

Findings. As a result of the research, the lack of support from the government and local administration, the low level of infrastructure, as well as the lack of knowledge of the local population on the implementation of ecotourism services, and the lack of specialists in this field were shown as the main common problems in the development of ecotourism. It was determined that the development of ecotourism has a positive economic, ecological and sociological impact on the local territory and directly contributes to sustainable development. The study's findings will be valuable to future researchers and stakeholders interested in ecotourism development.

Keywords: ecotourism, problems, challenges, development, prospects, economic, ecological, social, infrastructure, sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

In the current state of the world economy's growth, tourism is quickly becoming one of the leading and fastest growing businesses. Tourism helps to develop the key sectors of the economy by increasing the number of employment, tax revenues, and foreign currency inflows to the budget.

According to data from the World Tourism Organization, ecotourism is one of the segments of the tourism industry that is growing the fastest. It accounts for 25 % of global tourism, and the number of people using this service grows by 20 % annually [1]. While many countries are rich in ecotourism resources, their development level remains at a low level, including Kazakhstan, although it has a higher resource potential than other countries with developed ecotourism, but the development indicator does not correspond to it.

The number of annual users of this tourism service in Kazakhstan is 2 million people. According to the information received from the Forestry and Wildlife Committee of the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and

Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the size of specially protected natural areas in the country, i.e., areas suitable for the development of ecotourism, is 26 million hectares, and the area of ecotourism is ten times more than in developed countries, for example, in the USA and Australia, the number of ecotourists is about 200 million and 60 million people, respectively [2].

Nowadays, many programs and activities are being implemented in the country for the development of the tourism sector, in particular, the unique one of this programs are the «State program for the development of the tourism sector of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2019-2025». The main goal of this program is to increase the share of tourism in the country's GDP by at least 8 % by 2025 [3].

Kazakhstan is very rich in numerous natural sites that attract the attention of ecotourists, and has a high potential for ecotourism, which is associated with natural, recreational and ethnocultural tourism, since it possesses all the necessary aspects to establish itself as a significant participant on the global tourist scene, it has the potential to develop new tourism goods. However, Kazakh nation's indicators are weak when compared to how well-developed ecotourism is in the leading nations.

Based on the above mentioned information, despite the state support for the development of ecotourism in Kazakhstan, as well as all the resources, it can be determined that this tourism direction is a young industry that has not yet well established.

In this research work, it is important to analyze the problems encountered in the development of ecotourism and proposed solutions found in other research works. While achieving these goals, due to the lack of domestic research, foreign research works are reviewed, and as a result, the necessary data related to the field of ecotourism in Kazakhstan are selected.

The results of this study can be useful for future research to better identify the problems that arise in this field and can also be used in the work related to tourism operators and all stakeholders interested in the development of this field.

Methodology. In the first stage of the research, the conceptual boundaries of the literature review work were determined, that is, the main goal of the research was to determine the importance of ecotourism development based on other previous studies. In the process of achieving this goal, the main obstacles and prospects for the development of ecotourism were determined, research questions were formulated, and the main directions of research were formed. After determination the aim and objectives of the research the following research key-words were identified according to them: «ecotourism», «problem», «issues», «challenge», «development», «prospect», «perspective», «economic», «ecological», «social», «infrastructure», «sustainable development». Articles from Scopus Science Direct sources were reviewed using these keywords. Boolean OR/AND operators were used to increase the relevance of the reviewed articles to the research questions. Boolean operators are a very effective tool for literature review, as the optimal use of these operators helps to save time, identify relevant research topics, and most importantly, conduct a systematic review [4]. As another task of the research work is to determine the future development of ecological tourism, it was considered important to discuss the research works of the last years, therefore, the research works made in the last six years between 2017-2022 were considered. In addition to the articles of foreign researchers, the articles and books of domestic researchers, as well as the information on official website pages, were considered.

Literature review of world ecotourism. Ecotourism is described as «responsible travel to natural regions that conserves the environment, supports the well-being of local people, and involves interpretation and learning» by the International Ecotourism Society.

Ecotourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of tourism in the world today. This is because the majority of tourists are bored with traditional tourist activities and are looking for a new type of travel and new adventures. Countries with high potential in this tourist direction may encounter many problems in the development of ecotourism.

The low development of ecotourism in the Philippines is associated with its low potential. Initially, many benefits from ecotourism, such as economic, social and environmental benefits, attracted local governments and other interested parties, but many problems arose during the development of this industry. The existence of ecotourism resources is not a guarantee of its development, because the poor infrastructure and the location of these ecozones far from large metropolises have a negative effect on the fact that they cannot compete with

other tourist objects, and that they cannot attract the attention of visiting tourists. At the same time, improper management in eco-parks is the reason why it cannot provide sufficient services. As mentioned above, although the settlements are ecologically attractive, if the interested parties do not form and implement the correct eco-tourism development strategy, it is quite possible that its development potential will remain at a low level [6].

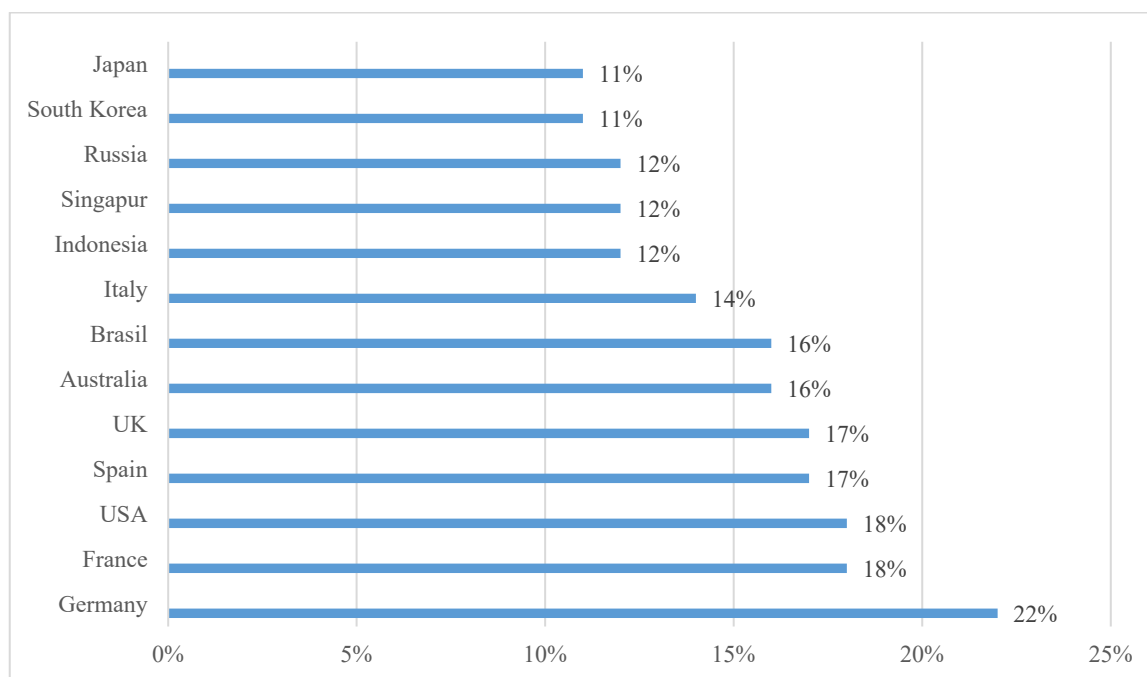


Figure 1 – Percentage of ecotourists in the country

Note – compiled by the author based on the source [5]

The location of the Ethiopian state in a favorable political region and the diversity of ecological natural resources can be considered as the main perspectives in the development of ecotourism. Despite of this, insufficient infrastructure quality highways, electric power, medical facilities, conflict between the parties in the use of natural resources, as well as the lack of educated and specialized labor force, is a hindrance to the development of ecotourism in the region [7].

Malaysia's Lower Kinabatangan Nature Reserve has all the prerequisites for economic benefits through the development of sustainable ecotourism. The number of participants in the development of this field among local communities is low. Only 42.4 % of the research participants work in tourism. The main obstacles in the development of local ecotourism are the lack of capital and knowledge among the community in this field of activity. Therefore, the direct participation of the local community in the formation of sustainable ecotourism and the presence of tourist experience play an important role [8].

While increasing the economic viability of ecotourism, one of the most important aspects is the fulfillment of basic requirements for the development of tourism. Formation of communication infrastructure and preservation of public safety are considered as basic principles [9].

In the development of ecotourism, the problems are not limited only to the lack of infrastructure, but also other issues that need to be solved may arise, for example, the lack of support from the state organizations, political and legislative point of view, and the problems that arise during the adoption of this field by the local community [10].

Although the problems mentioned above are related to lack of government attention, low participation of interested parties, lack of educated labor force and poor infrastructure, other problems may arise. If we pay attention to the results of the research conducted in the state of Ethiopia, one of the problems in the

development of the ecotourism industry is that the local population can see this industry among other industries, for example, livestock farming. That is, creating a view of ecotourism resources as property among the local community, paving the way for the sustainable development and growth of ecotourism in that region [11].

Different influence factors of ecotourism can be considered in different regions, which can be characterized depending on the degree of sustainable development of that region. Due to the large scale of this field, various factors affect it: social, environmental, political and cultural factors also play an important role [12].

A study based on an ecotourism development project on Nicaragua's Zapatera Island identified several barriers. For example, it is related to the lack of specialization of local residents in the field of tourism, the lack of enthusiasm of community members and government officials, and the lack of development of physical and social infrastructure [13].

World practice shows that ecotourism is a very promising and rapidly developing area of the tourism industry. For example, Central and South America have a huge number of natural areas, it can even be called the largest variety of fauna and flora. It is here that wild and virgin nature has been preserved. In Central America, the abundance of national parks and protected areas means that their presence has increased by 8 times compared to 1970. UNWTO reports that 48 % of tourists arriving in Latin America intend to visit nature reserves [14].

The extraordinary diverse and rich nature of Costa Rica attracts a lot of tourists. 27 % of the entire territory of Costa Rica is part of national parks and reserves. They are visited by 66 % of tourists arriving in the country. Tourism revenues in Costa Rica make up the bulk of the budget revenue to the national economy [15].

If we move to foreign Asia, we can say that for eco travelers Nepal is the center of mountain tourism in the Himalayas. Ecotourism, which successfully mixes exotic nature with fascinating cultural and ethnic artifacts, has a significant economic influence on countries like India, Thailand, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. There are also can be mentioned the Philippines, Malaysia, Bhutan, the southwestern mountainous part of China, covered with virgin forests. Japan pays great attention to the creation of national parks. This country, despite its small territory, having a large-scale urban agglomeration, has many national parks and nature reserves, the most popular is Mount Fuji National Park [16].

New Zealand and Australia are widely popular with ecotourists due to their unusual nature. There are more than 2,000 protected natural areas in Australia, which make up 4 % of the total territory of the country. There are 13 UNESCO-related events here, 2 of which were discovered on the island of Tasmania. In 1995, Australian poor parks reached 26,082 million people. tourists (about 70 % of tourists). There is a huge potential for the development of ecotourism on many islands of the Pacific Ocean [17].

Kazakhstan, in turn, also has a huge potential and many prerequisites for the development of ecotourism. This is evidenced by vast natural areas, national parks and nature reserves located on the territory of the republic.

Table 1 – National natural parks and reserves in Kazakhstan

№	Name of National natural parks and reserves	Size, ha	Location
1	Aksu-Zhabagily State Nature Reserve	131 934	Turkestan region and Zhambyl region
2	Almaty State Nature Reserve	71,700	Almaty region
3	Nauryzym State Nature Reserve	191 381	Kostanay region
4	Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve	160,826	Kyzylorda region
5	Korgalzhyn State Nature Reserve	543 171	Akmola region and Karaganda region
6	Markakol State Nature Reserve	102,979	East Kazakhstan region
7	Plateau State Nature Reserve	223 342	Mangistau region
8	Western Altai State Nature Reserve	86 122	East Kazakhstan region
9	Alakol State Nature Reserve	65 217.9	Almaty region and East Kazakhstan region
10	Karatau State Nature Reserve	34,300	Turkestan region
11	Bayanaul state national natural park	68 453	Pavlodar region
12	Ile Alatau state national natural park	199 703	Almaty region
13	«Altynemel» state national natural park	161 153	Almaty region

14	«Kokshetau» state national natural park	182,076	Akmola region and North Kazakhstan region
15	Karkaraly state national natural park	112 120	Karaganda region
16	«Burabay» state national natural park	129,935	Akmola region
17	Katonkaragai state national natural park	643 477	East Kazakhstan region
18	Sharyn state national natural park	127,050	Almaty region
19	Sayram-Ogem state national natural park	149 053	South Kazakhstan region
20	«Kulsai Lakes» state national natural park	161 045	Almaty region
21	Dzungar Alatau state national natural park	356 022	Almaty region
22	«Buiratau» state national natural park	88,968	Akmola region and Karaganda region
Note – Compiled by authors based on source [18]			

As mentioned above, Kazakhstan is very rich in ecotourism resources and has high development prospects, however, ecotourism in Kazakhstan has a weak competitiveness in the world market. Studies show that ecotourism needs development and special attention. According to Kazakhstan Tourism Association (KTA) estimates, nature reserves are visited mainly by foreign tourists, and ecotourism has practically no demand in the domestic market. This may be due to several problems: Firstly, most natural areas are located far from large cities and developed transport routes. Secondly, unemployment also affects the dependence of local residents on natural resources, especially in peripheral areas. Accordingly, illegal logging, overgrazing and increased haymaking, poaching, and uncontrolled harvesting of medicinal plants take place. Thirdly, the unclear state policy in the field of ecological tourism in Kazakhstan negatively affects its sustainable development [19]. Fourthly, on the territory of most natural areas there is no development of tourist infrastructure that provides a comfortable pastime for tourists. Thus, the Minister of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan Magzum Mirzagaliyev, during a briefing at the Central Communications Service of the Republic of Kazakhstan, noted that: «there are practically no equipped parking lots for vehicles, campsites, modern sanitary cabins in the national parks. To solve this situation, considering international experience, emphasis will be placed on the development and arrangement of routes and trails, modern visitor centers, medical centers, campsites, ethnic villages, etc. will be created» [20].

Results and Discussion. As a result of the literature analysis, it was found that ecotourism has a high development future, but despite this, many countries have common problems during the development of this direction of tourism. The importance of solving these identified problems with the participation of interested parties was shown. In addition, not only the problems were identified, but also the benefits of ecotourism were discussed. Bellow in Figure 2 presented a SWOT analysis for ecotourism.

During the analysis of the considered literature, a SWOT analysis was made of the strengths and weaknesses of world ecotourism, as well as opportunities and threats.

The difference of ecotourism lies in its relationship with nature, and it does not focus on the well-being of the consumers of tourism services. This is because ecotourists try to travel to ecotourism areas at any time and have as little impact on the natural resources of that area as possible [21].

One of the main issues to be considered during the development of ecotourism is the preservation of ecotourism resources in those regions and the improvement of the standard of living of the local region. Its main two goals are to preserve the protected biodiversity and to achieve economic and social stability for the livelihood of the region [22].

During this literature review, it is noticed that many countries faced common problems during the development of ecotourism. As a result of this research work, it is shown that the lack of infrastructure, the low level of support from the state and unstructured management policy, as well as the absence of education of local residents in the field of ecotourism and the lack of professionals, that is, socio-cultural issues, have an adverse effect on the development of this ecological direction of tourism. Solving these problems will strengthen the progress of ecotourism and pave the way for sustainable development of regions [23].

The improvement of infrastructure in ecotourism regions contributes to its striving for national and international level competition. The main problems of ecotourist zones are their location far from the potential market or lack of or low-quality roads leading to that area; the safety of visiting ecotourists or local residents;

homogeneity of the offered tourist product or low level of differentiation of services; factors such as absence or lack of information and telecommunication technology affect the attractiveness of ecotourism areas [24].

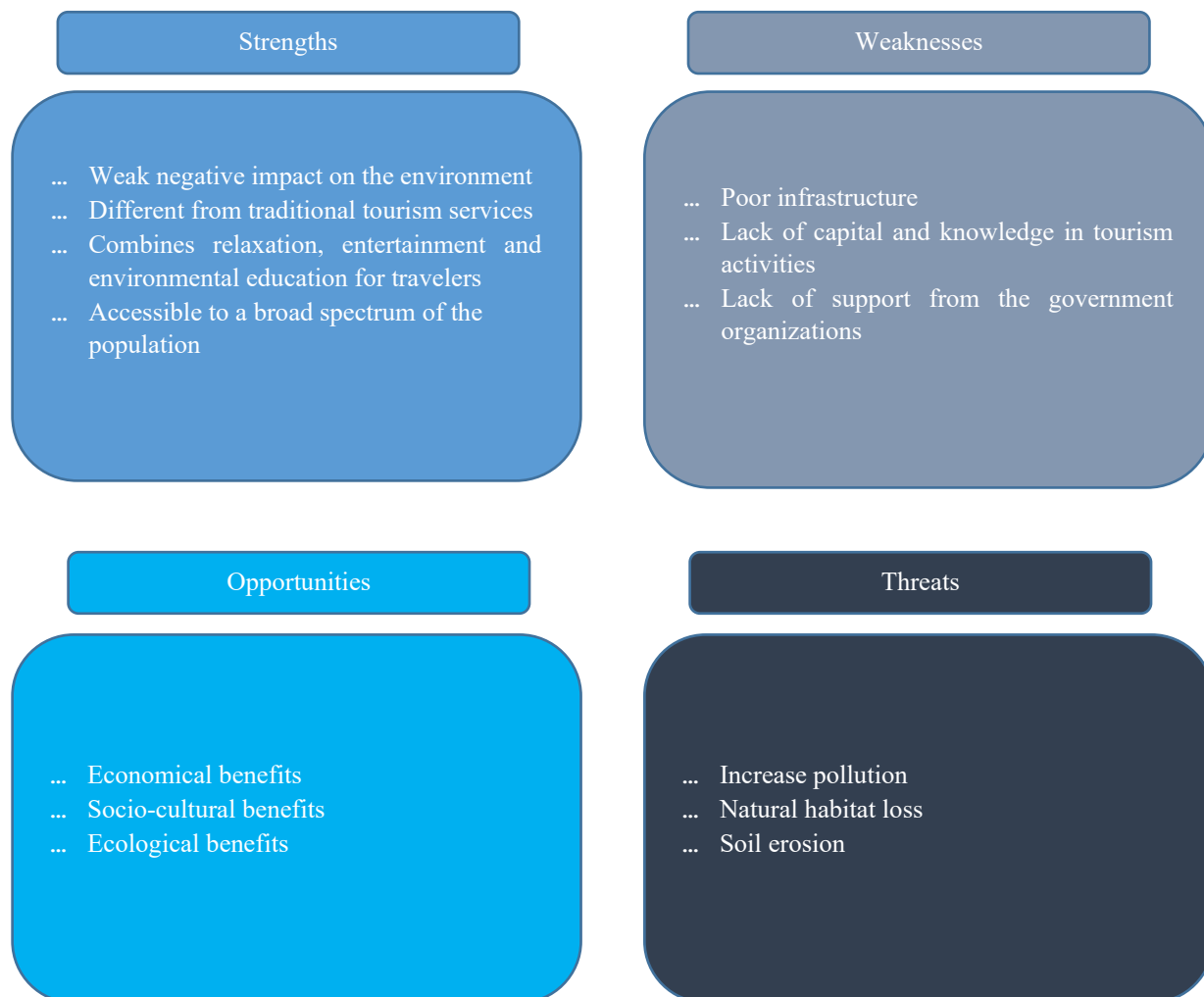


Figure 2 – SWOT analysis of the world ecotourism

Note – Compiled by authors based on sources [6; 21; 22; 23; 24; 25]

The presence of a large number of ecotourism resources in the regions cannot be a real guarantee of its development. The development of ecotourism areas is not only interesting to the parties providing tourism services, but also the support of the government and local administration plays an important role [6]. This is because the development of this ecotourism contributes to the economic and social stability of the territory, employment of the vast majority of local residents, and the development of other sectors related to this tourism activity [25].

Theoretical and practical implication. The result of this research work can be used as a source of information in the work of future researchers on the issues raised in this research work. Because during this research work, it was compiled by identifying common points of problems and ways of development that were considered separately in previous works.

As a result of the previous research conducted on the basis of other countries, the above-mentioned problems encountered during the development of ecotourism were considered and grouped in this research. On the basis of the program implemented in the period 2019-2025 in the development of this field of tourism of the country, paying attention to the problems identified in this research will help to prevent problems that may arise in the future.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, during the review of this literature, it was determined that ecotourism is a rapidly developing sector of general tourism. In addition, in many countries of the world, the number of ecotourists is increasing, but despite this, it was found that there are many important problems to be solved in the promotion of this tourist destination, and these problems are common in many countries.

In this research work, the low level of knowledge of local residents in the field of ecotourism and the lack of specialists, as well as the low level of infrastructure in ecotourism areas, i.e. the poor quality or lack of roads, the lack of information and communication technologies in those areas, the lack of other industry services related to this activity, public safety lack of preservation, lack of support from the government and local management organizations, unstructured management strategy, these mentioned problems were considered as the main obstacles to the development of ecotourism.

Solving the problems encountered during the development of ecotourism is very important, because it not only increases the share of ecotourism and increases the number of visiting tourists, but also has a huge impact on the economic, social and environmental stability of the local area.

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ЭКОТУРИЗМНІҢ ТҰРАҚТЫ ДАМУ МӘСЕЛЕЛЕРІ МЕН ДАМУ ПЕРСПЕКТИВАЛАРЫ: ӘДЕБИЕТТЕРГЕ ЖҮЙЕЛІ ШОЛУ

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АНДАТПА

Зерттеу мақсаты. Бұл мақалада алдыңғы ғылыми-зерттеу жұмыстарын қарастыра отырып, экотуризмді дамыту барысында кездесетін жалпы проблемалар мен болашақ даму перспективаларын анықтау және топтастыру ұсынылады.

Әдіснамасы. Бұл әдебиеттік шолуды жүргізу барысында зерттеу жұмысының мақсаты айқындалып, оның негізгі міндеттері қалыптастырылды. Зерттеу сұрақтары зерттеу мақсаттары негізінде құрылды, ал Scopus және Science Direct дереккөздерінің мақалалары зерттеу сұрақтарын құрайтын түйінді сөздер негізінде қаралды. 2017 жылдан 2022 жылға дейінгі мақалалар BULIN OR/AND операторлары арқылы зерттеу тақырыбына сәйкестігі бағаланды. Сонымен қатар, материалдар отандық ғалымдар жазған басылымдар, кітаптар және мемлекеттік сайттар арқылы жинақталды.

Зерттеудің бірегейлігі / құндылығы. Зерттеу барысында авторлар Қазақстандағы туризмді дамытудың 2019-2025 жылдарға арналған мемлекеттік бағдарламасының мақсаттарына сүйене отырып, экотуризмді дамытуда елдер тап болатын проблемаларды қарастырып, талдап, ең жиі кездесетін мәселелерді біріктірді. Бұл ретте шолу жұмысының нәтижесінде экотуризмнің жағдайы мен даму болашағына оң әсері анықталды.

Зерттеу нәтижелері. Жүргізілген зерттеулер нәтижесінде мемлекеттік және жергілікті әкімшілік тарапынан қолдаудың жоқтығы, инфрақұрылымның төмен деңгейі, сонымен қатар жергілікті тұрғындардың экотуризм қызметтерін жүзеге асыру бойынша білімінің төмендігі, осы саладағы мамандардың жетіспеушілігі экотуризмді дамытудың негізгі ортақ проблемалары ретінде көрсетілді. Экологиялық туризмді дамыту жергілікті аумаққа оң экономикалық, экологиялық және социологиялық әсер ететіні және тұрақты дамуға тікелей ықпал ететіні анықталды. Зерттеу нәтижелері болашақ зерттеушілер мен экотуризмді дамытуға мүдделі тараптар үшін құнды болады.

Түйін сөздер: экотуризм, мәселелер, қиындықтар, даму, перспективалар, экономикалық, экологиялық, әлеуметтік, инфрақұрылым, тұрақты даму.

ПРОБЛЕМЫ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ УСТОЙЧИВОГО РАЗВИТИЯ ЭКОТУРИЗМА: СИСТЕМАТИЧЕСКИЙ ОБЗОР ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ

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АННОТАЦИЯ

Цель исследования. В данной статье, учитывая предыдущие исследовательские работы, предлагается выявить и сгруппировать общие проблемы, возникающие при развитии экотуризма и перспективы дальнейшего развития.

Методология. При проведении данного литературного обзора была определена цель исследовательской работы и сформулированы ее основные задачи. Вопросы исследования были

сформированы на основе целей исследования, а статьи из источников Scopus и Science Direct были проанализированы на основе ключевых слов, составляющих вопросы исследования. Статьи с 2017 по 2022 год оценивались на соответствие теме исследования с помощью операторов BULIN OR/AND. Кроме того, материалы были собраны из публикаций отечественных ученых, книг и государственных сайтов.

Оригинальность / ценность исследования. В ходе исследования авторы, исходя из целей государственной программы развития туризма в Казахстане на 2019-2025 годы, рассмотрели и проанализировали проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются страны в развитии экотуризма, и объединили наиболее распространенные проблемы. При этом в результате обзорной работы определено положительное влияние экотуризма на состояние и перспективы развития.

Результаты исследования. В результате исследования выявлено отсутствие поддержки со стороны правительства и местной администрации, низкий уровень инфраструктуры, а также неосведомленность местного населения о реализации услуг экотуризма, нехватка специалистов в данной области были показаны как основные общие проблемы в развитии экотуризма. Определено, что развитие экотуризма оказывает положительное экономическое, экологическое и социологическое воздействие на локальную территорию и непосредственно способствует устойчивому развитию. Результаты исследования будут полезны будущим исследователям и заинтересованным сторонам в развитии экотуризма.

Ключевые слова: экотуризм, проблемы, вызовы, развитие, перспективы, экономические, экологические, социальные, инфраструктура, устойчивое развитие.

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