

**PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM IN THE CONTEXT  
OF THE DIGITAL ECONOMY****Sa'dullayev Bekhzod Sodiq ogli**

researcher

**Annotation:** The article examines the prospects for the development of rural tourism within the framework of the digital economy. It highlights how modern digital technologies — such as online marketing, virtual platforms, and digital management tools — contribute to the promotion and sustainability of rural tourism. The study emphasizes the importance of digital transformation for increasing competitiveness, improving service quality, and attracting both domestic and international tourists. Special attention is given to challenges such as digital literacy, infrastructure development, and the integration of local communities into the digital ecosystem.

**Keywords:** rural tourism, digital economy, innovation, digital transformation, sustainable development, online marketing, local communities.

Rural tourism is becoming increasingly popular among urban residents who seek to enjoy nature and experience unique solitude, natural beauty, and distinctive cultural and spiritual lifestyles. This type of tourism not only provides an opportunity to immerse oneself in rural life but also contributes to the development of rural areas by creating additional sources of income for the local population.

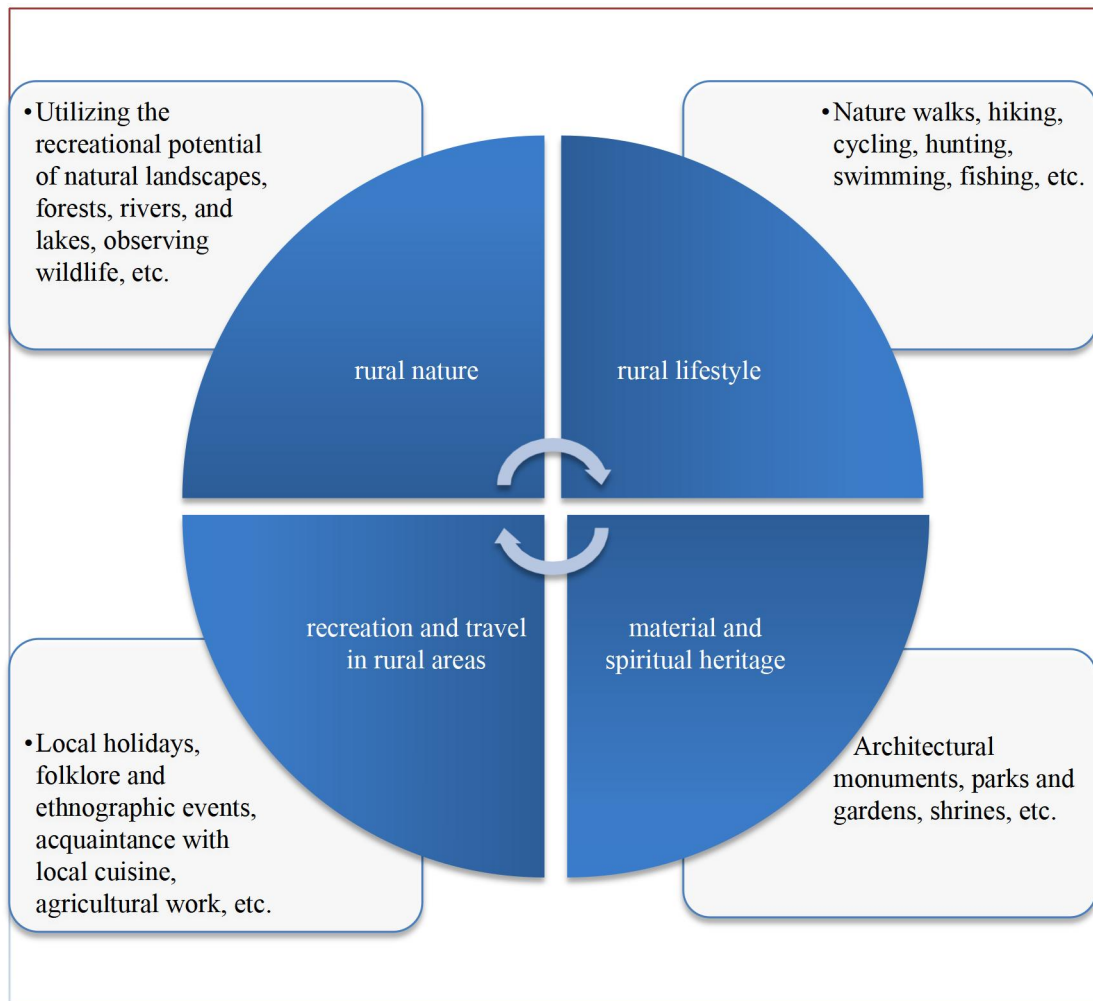
Globally, tourism is considered one of the fastest-growing sectors of economic activity. Its impact on the world economy, as well as the economies of individual countries and regions, shows a constant upward trend and positively influences the development of other service sectors. Therefore, the diversification of tourism services is evident in addressing the specific needs of the population. In particular, under conditions of a stable economy, rural tourism is developing at a high pace. “45.3% of the world’s population resides in rural areas, and in regions rich in natural and ecological diversity, with agriculture historically developed based on national traditions, 35–45% of tourists prefer to spend their leisure time in rural areas”<sup>1</sup>.

The development of rural tourism primarily benefits the population living in rural areas economically. Additional income generated from providing accommodation, food, excursions, and other tourism services can be spent on developing rural infrastructure, education, and other social needs. In this way, rural tourism is considered one of the key factors in improving the standard of living in these areas.

Rural tourism also plays an important role in preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of a region. Tourists often seek genuine cultural and historical experiences, such as visiting local handicraft workshops, tasting traditional cuisine, or participating in festival events.

<sup>1</sup> Остонов Ў. ҚИШЛОҚ ТУРИЗМИНИ ДАВЛАТ ТОМОНИДАН ТАРТИБГА СОЛИШ ВА УНИ РИВОЖЛАНТИРИШНИНГ ИНСТИТУЦИОНАЛ ИМКОНИАТЛАРИ ТАҲЛИЛИ //Iqtisodiyot va ta'lim. – 2023. – Т. 24. – №. 3. – С. 423-427.

This helps to preserve and develop traditional knowledge and skills, while also creating additional employment opportunities.



**Figure 1. Opportunities of rural tourism**

Under a system of measures aimed at developing agriculture, rural tourism makes a significant contribution to promoting the demand for local food products. Direct sales of agricultural products to tourists or supplying restaurants and cafes with natural and fresh ingredients serve as an important source of income for farmers. In addition, rural tourism contributes to the promotion and dissemination of environmentally friendly farming practices.

However, it is also important to recognize the potential risks associated with the development of rural tourism. Without proper planning and management, it can lead to the degradation of natural resources, loss of biodiversity, and even cultural assimilation. Therefore, developing strategies that take into account ecological and socio-cultural sustainability is essential.

Overall, with the right approach, rural tourism can become a powerful tool for rural development, creating economic opportunities, preserving cultural heritage, and contributing to the sustainable development of agriculture. It is also worth noting that rural tourism facilitates the exchange of experiences and knowledge between urban and rural areas. Tourists visiting rural areas often encounter new agricultural methods, unique cultural practices, and other regional development features that could be implemented or adapted elsewhere.

Rural tourism is also an important tool for young people to realize their potential and opportunities for business and professional growth, allowing them to earn income without leaving their place of residence. This helps to counter the depopulation of rural areas, which is a pressing issue in many countries.

On the other hand, the successful development of rural tourism requires the adoption of modern technologies and innovations. From creating modern and comfortable living conditions to developing marketing strategies and digital platforms to attract tourists, all of these aspects are essential for achieving competitiveness in the global tourism market.

It is also necessary to consider the needs of the local population. Tourism development must align with the interests of rural residents to prevent potential conflicts and ensure long-term sustainability and prosperity for all parties involved. In short, as a form of rural entrepreneurship, rural tourism is a multifaceted and promising field that, with the right approach, can bring significant benefits both to agriculture and to regional development as a whole.

In many countries around the world, rural tourism is considered one of the key directions for developing rural entrepreneurship, preserving natural landscapes, and promoting regional development. For example, the Alpine pastures in Switzerland, the windmills and canals of the Netherlands, and the ancient gardens and villas of Italy have been preserved through the development of rural tourism<sup>2</sup>.

In European Union countries such as Italy, France, and Germany, the effective development of rural tourism has enabled this sector to become an independent and sustainable part of the economy. In these countries, rural tourism significantly contributes to increasing the income of rural populations and improving rural infrastructure. Today, Greece and Cyprus are considered international leaders in rural tourism<sup>3</sup>.

The main advantages of rural tourism are as follows:

- Improvement of rural areas, development of engineering and social infrastructure; reduction of unemployment and stimulation of new job creation.
- Increase in rural residents' incomes and improvement of living standards with relatively low financial costs.
- Development of small businesses in rural areas.
- Enhancement of the ecological attractiveness of rural areas.
- Expansion of the variety of products grown in household plots; direct sale of personal auxiliary farm products, especially processed food products, on site.
- Encouragement of the preservation of local landmarks, traditions, folklore, and handicrafts.

---

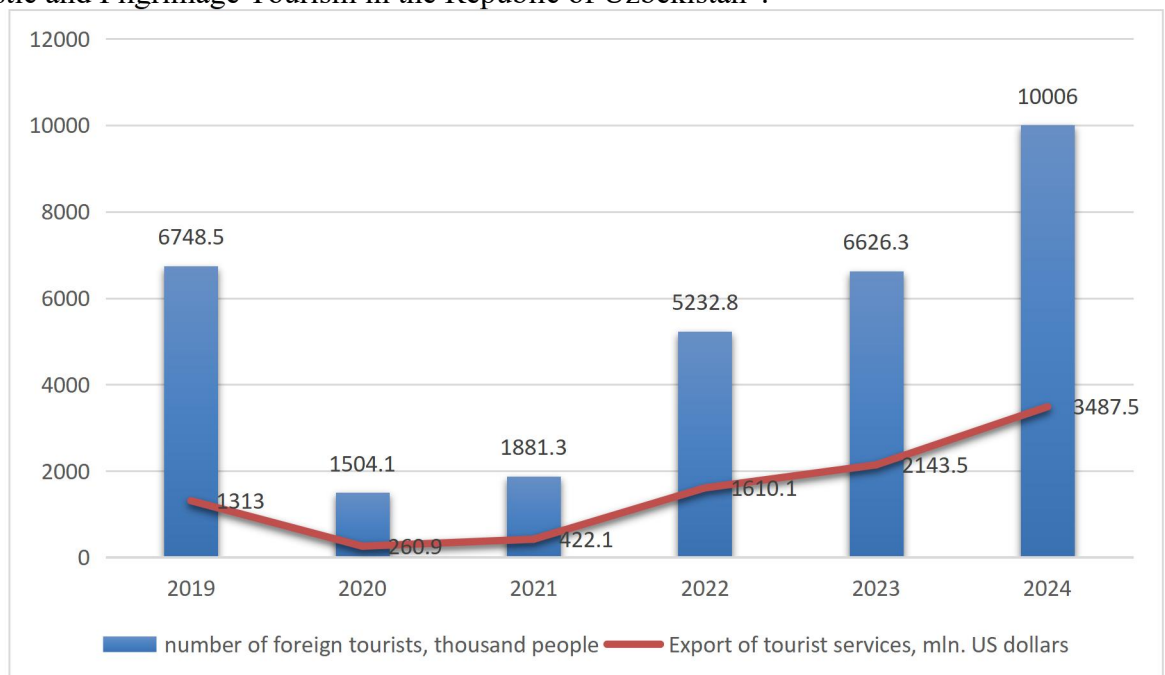
<sup>2</sup> Hall D. Rural tourism development in southeastern Europe: Transition and the search for sustainability //International journal of tourism research. – 2004. – Т. 6. – №. 3. – С. 165-176.

<sup>3</sup> Здоров А. Б. Комплексное развитие туризма в сельской местности //Проблемы прогнозирования. – 2009. – №. 4. – С. 149-153.

- Improvement of the cultural and educational level of rural residents.
- Supplementing local budgets with additional income.
- No need for large investments, primarily using private financing sources, with rapid payback on investments.

In recent years, great attention has been paid to the development of the tourism sector in the Republic. The government has introduced a number of measures and regulatory documents aimed at supporting the industry. In particular, the “Uzbekistan-2030” strategy envisages increasing the number of foreign tourists to 15 million, domestic tourists to 25 million, and pilgrims visiting for religious tourism to 3 million. The strategy also aims to raise tourism service exports to 5 billion dollars and medical and educational tourism exports to 1.5 billion dollars per year.

A number of measures are being implemented to enhance the attractiveness and competitiveness of the tourism market, diversify tourism products and services, and strengthen Uzbekistan’s image as a safe destination for tourism. A clear example of this is the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated February 9, 2021, “On Measures to Develop Domestic and Pilgrimage Tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan”.



**Figure 2. Indicators of the tourism potential of Uzbekistan**

**Source:** compiled based on data from the National Statistics Committee.

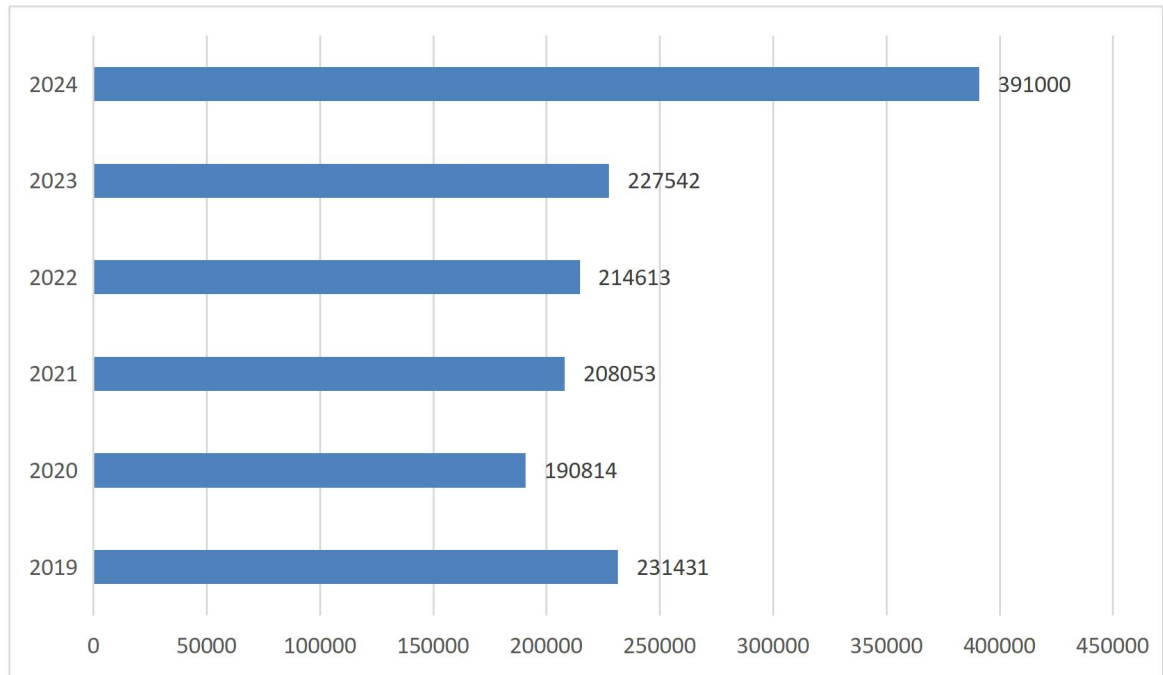
As a result of measures aimed at developing tourism in the Republic, the number of foreign tourists visiting the country and the volume of tourism service exports are increasing. In particular, in 2024, the number of foreign visitors exceeded 10 million, while tourism service exports reached 3.5 billion USD. At the same time, nearly 21 million domestic citizens traveled within the country (Figure 2).

The development of rural tourism plays an important role in expanding rural entrepreneurship through the establishment of family guesthouses, hostels, yurts, and tent camps.

A family guesthouse is a private accommodation facility where the host family lives together with visitors (tourists) and provides temporary lodging and/or meals for up to 10 guests at a time. Each resident is allocated living space of 3 square meters.

A yurt camp is a specialized tourist facility designed to introduce visitors (tourists) to the history and cultural characteristics of nomadic lifestyles. It provides temporary lodging and/or meals in an ethnic style, with sanitary and hygienic amenities, and each resident has 4.5 square meters of living space.

A tent camp provides temporary lodging and/or meals for visitors (tourists) and consists of portable, easily assembled and disassembled textile shelters (tents) with sanitary and hygienic facilities.



**Figure 3. Number of people employed in the tourism sector, people**

**Source:** compiled based on data from the National Statistics Committee.

As a result of measures aimed at developing rural tourism, not only has the number of accommodation facilities increased, but the number of family guesthouses has also grown significantly.

During the analyzed period, the number of family guesthouses increased from 886 to 3,458, while the number of rooms rose from 2,323 to 11,579, and the total number of beds reached 30,738.

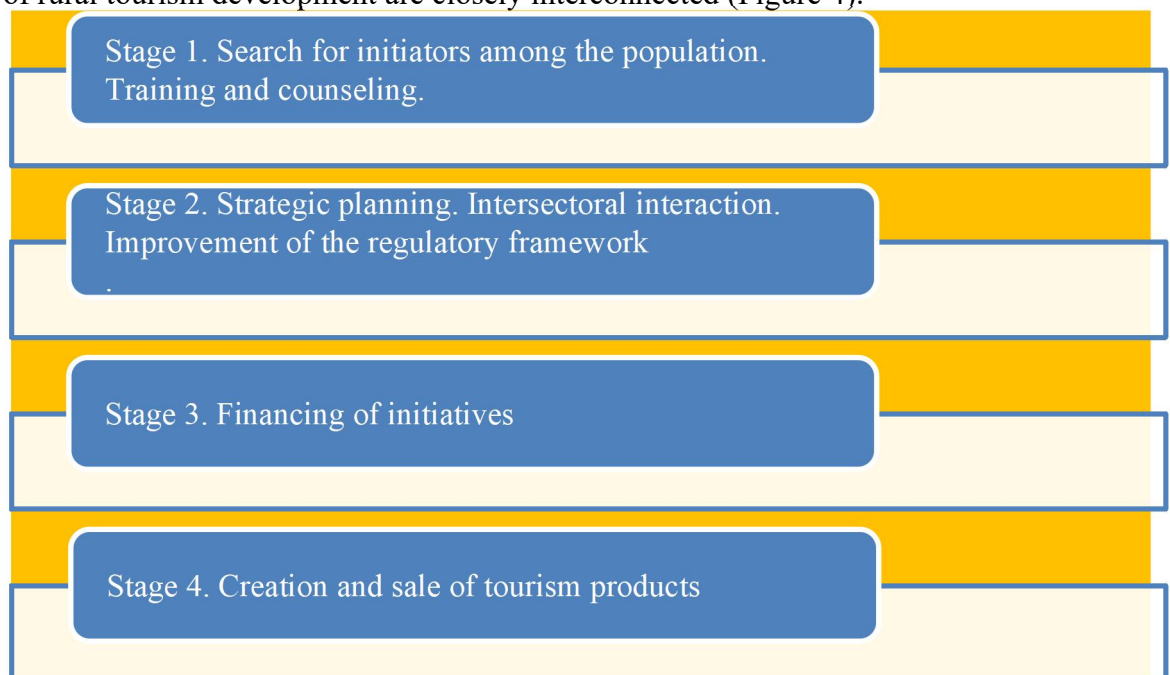
By region, the highest number of family guesthouses was established in Tashkent Region (878), Namangan Region (641), Samarkand Region (352), and Fergana Region (259), while the fewest were in Sirdaryo Region (15) and the Republic of Karakalpakstan (45).

The training system for personnel plays a key role in the development of rural tourism. In this regard, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PQ-269 dated

18.07.2024, “On Measures to Improve the System of Training Personnel in the Tourism Sector,” defines several measures. In particular, starting from the 2024/2025 academic year, higher education institutions in Uzbekistan will implement a three-year higher education program for tourism and hotel management, organized in a dual education format based on a “block-module” system.

Overall, employment indicators in the tourism sector are gradually increasing. In particular, nearly 9,000 people in rural areas have been employed through the establishment of family guesthouses (Figure 3).

A process-based approach can be proposed for developing entrepreneurship through rural tourism. The first stage involves conducting awareness and outreach activities among the population to identify proactive participants. The second stage focuses on strategic planning, determining the interconnections between sectors and industries. Since the implementation of any project requires funding, the third stage addresses financing for rural initiatives. The fourth stage involves the creation of tourism products and their introduction to the market. Clearly, the stages of rural tourism development are closely interconnected (Figure 4).



**Figure 4. Process approach to the development of rural tourism**

For rural tourism to develop deeply as an important form of rural entrepreneurship, it is necessary to implement the following measures:

- Establish a reliable legal and regulatory framework to support rural tourism;
- Develop government programs that promote the development of rural tourism;
- Conduct a comprehensive survey of the tourist resources of rural areas and accelerate the implementation of programs for the social development of rural communities through effective use of these resources within the framework of regional agrotourism;
- Develop a financing mechanism for rural tourism, including providing subsidies, grants, and microgrants to subjects of agrotourism activities;



- Implement additional educational programs to train qualified personnel for running rural tourism businesses;
- Summarize and apply local and international experience in the development of rural tourism, among other measures.

**List of used literature:**

1. Остонов, Ў. Қишлоқ туризмни давлат томонидан тартибга солиш ва уни ривожлантиришнинг институционал имкониятлари таҳлили // *Iqtisodiyot va ta'lim*. – 2023. – Т. 24. – №. 3. – С. 423-427.
2. Hall, D. Rural tourism development in southeastern Europe: Transition and the search for sustainability // *International Journal of Tourism Research*. – 2004. – Т. 6. – №. 3. – С. 165-176.
3. Здоров, А. Б. Комплексное развитие туризма в сельской местности // *Проблемы прогнозирования*. – 2009. – №. 4. – С. 149-153.
4. Абдувохидов, Акмал, et al. "Қишлоқ хўжалигида иқтисодий ўсиш сифатини аниқлаш ва унинг кўрсаткичлари таҳлили." *Iqtisodiyot va ta'lim* 23.4 (2022): 16-31.
5. Абдувахидов, А. А. "аграр секторда инновацион тадбиркорликни ривожлантиришнинг йўллари." *Barqarorlik va yetakchi tadqiqotlar onlayn ilmiy jurnali* 2.10 (2022): 9-12.