

**UDC: 352/354:338.48:502/504**

**DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.13304656**

**PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF GLOBAL EXPERIENCE IN DEVELOPING  
SUSTAINABLE AND SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE ECOTOURISM**

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**Abstract.** The article identifies current concepts and innovations utilized in ecological tourism, including the construction of environmentally certified housing, the development and promotion of environmentally friendly modes of transportation, the organization of hotel services based on ecological principles, the Zero Waste concept, and the social-rehabilitation function of ecotourism. A preliminary analysis of successful practices in the development of ecotourism is conducted, summarizing the experiences of various countries in promoting sustainable and socially responsible ecotourism. It is established that the key components of ecotourism are eco-friendly housing (buildings constructed from environmentally clean natural materials using the latest nature and energy-saving technologies) and the natural environment. Today, the tourism market offers a wide range of eco-friendly housing options (eco-hotels,

eco-houses) made from wood, clay, stone, straw, and earth.

The impact of ecotourism on the social development of the local community is also examined. It is proven that existing eco-projects contribute to environmental preservation and significantly influence the economy, social sphere, culture, and education, thereby fostering sustainable communities and improving the quality of life for local residents.

**Keywords:** public administration, sustainable development, ecological tourism, socially responsible tourism, social project, innovations, eco-trends, Zero Waste concept.

**Introduction.** Ecotourism is a new trend in modern society. It increasingly attracts tourists from various countries and proves to be quite profitable for private tour operators, local communities, and the region or country as a whole. Often, ecotourism is confused with ordinary outdoor recreation, which can negatively impact the environment (pollution of natural areas, depletion of natural resources, damage to tourist and natural-recreational sites, disruption of wildlife habitats, ecosystem degradation due to excessive strain, etc.) and have negative social consequences (conflicts between locals and tourists, destruction of traditions and unique aspects of the local way of life, commercialization of culture, degradation of family life—divorce, destruction of spiritual foundations of the family, generational misunderstandings, consumer attitudes, parental overprotection, shifting social roles, etc.—an increase in unskilled labor, and deviations from social norms of behavior—alcoholism, crime, etc.).

A significant distinction of ecotourism from other forms of recreation is that these journeys are environmentally responsible and aim not only at enjoying the aesthetic and physical pleasure of local landscapes but also at preserving and protecting the environment with minimal human intervention in natural areas. Ecotourism should fulfill several tasks, namely: having a low impact on protected areas and resources; involving stakeholders (individuals, ecotourists, tour operators,

local community members, and government institutions) in the planning, development, implementation, and monitoring of protected areas; respecting local culture and traditions; generating stable and fair income for the local population, communities, and other stakeholders, including private tour operators; generating profits for the conservation of protected areas and resources; and promoting environmentally responsible behavior in society to protect the environment [2].

Thus, the functions of ecotourism include:

- Eco-educational – helping to nurture environmentally responsible tourists;
- Cultural – providing opportunities for people to learn about local culture and exchange experiences;
- Educational – fostering respect for different cultures;
- Legal-educational – nurturing respect for human rights, shaping legal consciousness and culture, stimulating the development of socially responsible individuals;
- Financial-economic – providing funds directed toward environmental conservation and benefiting the development of local communities;
- Political – strengthening the political capabilities of local communities.

Given the global challenges facing humanity, related to the state of the planet's ecosystem (climate change due to pollution, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, deforestation, desertification, water pollution, waste management issues, air pollution, etc.) [5], ensuring environmental sustainability is crucial. This is one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) [7], established at the international level in 2000. Later, in 2015, the goals related to protecting the planet were expanded. Among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, six address environmental issues: Goal 6. Clean Water and Sanitation; Goal 7. Affordable and Clean Energy; Goals 12-15. Responsible Consumption and Production; Climate Action; Life Below Water; and Life on Land [13]. Ecotourism aligns with internationally declared principles of environmental sustainability. It combines conservation efforts with environmental education, has economic significance for the local community, and enhances the

social efficiency of tourism. Today, some countries worldwide have already achieved certain successes in developing ecotourism, so studying and summarizing this experience will be beneficial for those countries and regions wishing to implement ecological technologies, innovations, and practices.

**The analysis of research and problem definition.** The theoretical and practical aspects of ensuring sustainable development, organizing socially responsible tourism, and ecotourism as a rapidly growing form of sustainable, nature-oriented tourism are increasingly becoming subjects of scientific research. In academic works, authors pay considerable attention to studying the innovations and technologies used in ecotourism, highlighting its economic, environmental, and cultural value. Unfortunately, the experience of successful practices in developing ecotourism and assessing its impact on local residents remains underexplored.

**The purpose of this article** is to identify current concepts and innovations used in ecotourism; conduct a preliminary analysis of successful practices in the development of ecotourism; and summarize the experiences of various countries in fostering sustainable and socially responsible ecotourism. Additionally, the article aims to assess the impact of ecotourism on the social development of local communities.

**The results of the research.** Before delving into a review of successful ecotourism development practices, it's important to note that innovations serve as a crucial tool for humanity to address global environmental challenges and the increasing consumption of natural resources. These innovations simultaneously drive sustainable development and economic growth in a region or country [12]. In the tourism sector, which is a powerful and profitable component of the economy in many countries, innovative measures, technologies, and products are being actively implemented. Ecotourism is no exception. Systematizing the most widespread innovative practices used in ecotourism allows us to highlight the following areas:

- Construction of eco-certified housing (eco-hotels) that minimizes its negative impact on the environment (using energy-efficient technologies and renewable

sources; minimizing environmental impact by collecting rainwater and using solar panels; incorporating interior features such as green walls, herb gardens, living flower or plant artworks, etc.) [11];

- Development and promotion of eco-friendly modes of transportation in the tourism sector (electric buses, bicycles, scooters, etc.) [4];

- Organization of hotel operations based on ecological principles (developing waste recycling programs, using centralized vacuum cleaning systems, cleaning with phosphate-free household chemicals or probiotic cleaners, etc.) [1; 4];

- Introduction of the Zero Waste concept in the hotel industry, aimed at reducing waste (organic food as a new food philosophy; serving dishes in edible or eco-friendly containers; using new movements like "nose-to-tail" cooking (using the entire animal carcass), ugly fruits (purchasing non-select vegetables and fruits), and Trash Tiki (making cocktails from fruit peels and seeds that are usually discarded)) [5; 9; 10];

- Development of tourism with a social rehabilitation function, such as for military and civilian individuals affected by armed conflict [6].

Thus, innovations are being implemented across various areas, helping to ensure tourist safety, develop tourism infrastructure, enhance the efficiency of human resources, and address issues of recreational land use and environmental protection.

Let's now present examples of successful ecotourism development practices from several countries and highlight their specific features. First and foremost, it should be noted that the development of ecotourism is often part of the management strategy for protected areas overseen by the state, sometimes local authorities, but increasingly, non-governmental organizations and private individuals, including ecotourists, are becoming involved in this activity. Unfortunately, the number of natural areas on the planet that have not experienced anthropogenic interference is very small, and we understand that this will continue to decrease. Therefore, the task of governments and local communities, when granting permission to develop ecotourism in their territories, is to minimize human interference with nature. This

applies to the construction of housing, the influx of tourists (the load on protected areas), and the organization of their leisure activities. For effective territory management, the authorities must go through several phases (from planning to implementation and usage) and consider the needs of ecotourism, protected areas, and the local community.

With the growing popularity of ecotourism worldwide, eco-friendly buildings are emerging to meet the demands of ecotourists. Among the top 5 eco-hotels in the world are Hotel Brooklyn Bridge (New York, USA), The Springs Resort (Colorado, USA), Mashpi Lodge (Quito, Ecuador), Arenas Del Mar Beach & Rainforest Resort (Costa Rica), and Camp Glenorchy (New Zealand). The leader, Hotel Brooklyn Bridge (New York, USA), holds a gold certification from LEED, an organization that oversees eco-friendly construction. The hotel is made entirely of environmentally friendly materials that do not harm the environment, and its grounds feature many natural zones with various trees and flowers. The hotel is highly responsible in its use of energy—solar panels and smart lighting and heating control systems are installed throughout. Guests are treated to delicacies made from locally sourced products. Another hotel, Arenas Del Mar Beach & Rainforest Resort, is located in a stunning reserve spanning tens of hectares, home to about 7,000 trees. Here, tourists can see sloths, monkeys, and other animals. The hotel has its own garden, where vegetables for the restaurant are grown. Notably, the management of these hotels prohibits guests from using plastic bottles and disposable bags, regardless of their status or financial capacity. Like other hotels, eco-hotels offer tourists excursions, bike tours, themed evenings, and more [8].

In addition to eco-hotels, tourists are offered eco-friendly homes made from environmentally clean materials using the latest energy and nature conservation technologies. The main materials used include wood, clay, stone, and straw. Tour operators can also offer tourists a unique experience by staying in an earth house.

Treehouses are particularly popular among eco-tourists. These structures attract special attention due to their architectural marvel, originality, and the opportunity to

be closer to nature. The main principle of constructing these houses is minimal interference with nature, positioning the house so as not to harm the trees themselves. Examples of unique treehouse projects around the world include: in Sweden, the "Human Nest" (a house resembling a bird's nest), a mirrored cube (a house that blends with nature and becomes almost invisible), and a flying saucer; in Japan, the "Birdhouse" (a house divided into two parts by a glass wall—one for humans and the other for birds) and a teapot-shaped tea house; in Canada, the "Free Spirit Sphere" (a spherical house); and more. In some countries, entire hotel complexes with restaurants are built in the trees, such as the Yellow Treehouse Restaurant in New Zealand and hotel complexes in the Alnwick Gardens in Scotland [14].

In Egypt, where earth is a natural building material, it has been traditionally used by Egyptians for home construction due to its recyclability and thermal properties. Over time, this practice was replaced by modern technologies. However, the revival of traditional building methods has been undertaken by the founder of the LAZULI Nile Cruises travel agency, Wally Aziz, an Egyptologist and Egyptophile. He established the small LAZULI ecolodge village on the edge of the Bahariya Oasis and the Western Desert, featuring 24 eco-houses built from natural materials sourced from the oasis—raw earth, date palm trunks, and acacia wood. Electricity in the houses is generated by solar energy, meeting all energy needs. LAZULI ecolodge is the first hotel in Egypt to use solar energy as a clean source. The construction is marked by authenticity, quality, and respect for the local population. The agency also operates a fleet of Dahabiehs, including 8 traditional passenger boats and a ship on Lake Nasser, offering tourists unique journeys. The boats are also eco-friendly, equipped with photovoltaic panels, wastewater filtration for clean discharge into the Nile, natural soap, and healthy traditional cuisine. Additionally, the agency has environmental commitments, organizing cruises that facilitate interactions between travelers and local children, providing them with necessary educational materials, and familiarizing them with methods and tools for environmental conservation [3].

Overall, the activities of the LAZULI Nile Cruises agency are based on the

principles of sustainable development, harmony with the natural environment, and socially responsible tourism. Important environmental aspects include:

- Choice of materials for eco-houses: Using local natural materials reduces the carbon footprint of transportation and enhances the energy efficiency of buildings.

- Construction technologies: Earth blocks are pressed on-site, ensuring high strength and thermal insulation properties. Natural materials create a natural microclimate in the premises, providing a comfortable temperature.

- Energy efficiency: The hotel uses renewable energy sources, reducing dependence on traditional energy sources.

- Water supply and waste disposal: Systems for collecting rainwater and biological wastewater treatment are used, conserving water resources and minimizing environmental impact.

- Design and planning: The design of eco-houses takes into account the natural landscape to ensure minimal impact on the ecosystem. Their architecture promotes natural ventilation and lighting, reducing the need for air conditioning and artificial lighting.

- Involvement of local communities: The construction and management of the hotel eco-complex involve active participation from local residents, contributing to the development of the local economy and the preservation of cultural traditions.

**Conclusions.** The preliminary analysis of successful practices in ecotourism development and the synthesis of experiences from various countries in sustainable and socially responsible ecotourism reveal the impact of ecotourism on environmental protection and the socio-economic development of local communities. Overall, it can be stated that eco-projects contribute to a shift in people's life philosophy, particularly regarding housing—one can have comfortable and at the same time sustainable housing that uses eco-friendly natural materials, which help reduce energy costs and improve quality of life. The use of renewable energy sources and water collection systems decreases utility expenses, allowing residents to save money and enhance their well-being. Eco-housing becomes accessible to local



residents and improves their overall satisfaction.

Eco-projects have significant socio-economic importance, including job creation in sectors such as construction, environmental protection, tourism, hospitality, and transportation, as well as contributing to the development of regional infrastructure. Thus, with the growth of ecotourism, unemployment levels decrease, the standard of living rises, and the local economy is stimulated.

In addition to economic aspects, ecological projects play a crucial role in preserving and reviving local cultural traditions, creating new opportunities for education and professional training, providing participants with the knowledge and skills necessary for working with ecological principles and modern environmental technologies. Eco-projects contribute to raising environmental awareness, fostering a responsible attitude towards nature, and encouraging a transition to an environmentally sound lifestyle.

Involving residents in eco-projects stimulates the development of their civic engagement. More frequently, local residents are participating in decision-making related to their community. This unites them around common goals, enhances social cohesion, and strengthens social bonds among community members. Finally, the use of natural materials and the creation of favorable living conditions contribute to the improvement of physical and mental health for residents.

In summary, ecological projects promote environmental conservation, have a significant impact on the economy, social sphere, culture, and education, forming sustainable communities and enhancing the quality of life for people.

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