

## Successful Geo-Tourism Development: Balancing Profitability, Cultural Heritage Preservation and Sustainable Destination Management

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The thesis explores the challenge of the successful development of geo-tourism in respect of the trade-off for economic interests, conservation of cultural heritage and sustainable management of destinations. **Method:** For instance, we perform data analysis using scientific literature, secondary data analysis, and international experience comparison. The possibility of effective management of geo-tourism will also be probed by the case of developing tourist centers. **Results:** The study findings look at the economic contributions of geo-tourism, issues relating to cultural heritage protection, and the management of sustainable destination factors. The study showed the importance of joint venture between government, private organizations, and locals for the growth of geo-tourism. **Novelty:** In fact, to support the needs for the cooperation of the relevant parts, geo-tourism has become an emerging modern solution to a key challenge of sustainable tourism while integrating heritage protection with the development of the tourist economy.

## INTRODUCTION

The development of the world tourist industry in recent years has occurred rapidly and it is considered as one of the major components of the economic growth of many countries. However, with the development of tourism, new problems were appearing such as the mounting strain on the environment, a loss due to the destruction of some cultural and historic heritage and the inefficient utilization of material resources. The negative impacts of this development can be reflected in problems like pollution and pollution-related diseases. Among these trends, trend of sustainability is particularly growing in the development of contemporary tourism. One is Geo-tourism or tourism that is inclusive of protection of one's nature and culture.

Geo-tourism aims to deliver the geological and natural resources and cultural and historical value of the area to visitors in a healthy manner. This kind of tourism is to optimize the natural resources, maintain natural proportions of the ecological components and keep the sustainable growth of the region. Geo-tourism, meanwhile, provides new employment opportunities in those areas; small businesses and the service economy are generating the incomes of locals. On that point, geo-tourism is also another factor to be emphasized along with economic profitability. At the same time, the heavy emphasis on economic benefits of geo-tourism in the construction of the tourism industry may have adverse effects on cultural and natural heritage sites. Unauthorized growth of tourist infrastructure at a level not within the norm of the number of visitors and poor management mechanisms in many places is causing adverse effects according to the

studies of various locations. As a result, the original appearance of these heritage sites has disappeared when the landscape goes out of date, ecological structure is neglected, and the interest of those living in those sites go down and the locals are not fully listened to.

Accordingly, maintaining a trade-off between economic profitability, the preservation of cultural heritage and sustainable destination management in the process of development of geo-tourism is one of the most important scientific and practical problems. This master thesis aims to find effective ways to apply ways on the successful development of geo-tourism, while optimizing economic productivity and preserving cultural and geological heritage and sustainable management of destinations. The research highlights the economic and cultural impact of geo-tourism challenges, the problem related to the conservation of tourism destinations, and those resulting from the sustainable management of those destinations. Using international experience and the case of developing tourist areas, the strategic evaluation of effective management of geo-tourism is assessed. The scientific contribution of the thesis work is embodied in an organization of existing scientific viewpoints on geo-tourism and sustainable tourism development. It has a practical meaning as it helps to implement the research results to form geo-tourism policy, to establish a strategic plan for the preservation of cultural heritage sites and to support the planning of the development of potential tourist areas in the future. The study's findings have some practical recommendations that governments, professionals in tourism and scientists.

### **Research questions?**

1. How geo-tourism sites are safeguarded while also benefiting geological and cultural heritage sites economically?
2. Which impact on long-term development of management strategies employed to guarantee sustainable management of geo-tourism destinations?
3. Does sustainable development benefit from involving as stakeholders in the execution of geo-tourism initiatives?
4. What integrated strategies may be applied to promote ethical and sustainable geotourism in the growth of tourist destinations based on global experience?

### **Objectives and aims**

The goal of this dissertation is to establish and discuss the interrelationships arising from economic profitability, geological and cultural heritage protection, and sustainable destination management, as part of the successful development process of geo-tourism. This research also aims to develop efficient management programs for sustainable and responsible geo-tourism.

### **Research aims**

With the purpose of this study, the following tasks were proposed:

1. Examining strategies for safeguarding geo-logical and also cultural heritage sites with guaranteeing financial success in that chosen areas.
2. In order to assess the efficacy of management tactics are meant to be

guarantee sustainable growth in geo-tourism locations.

3. To know about how the involvement of local citizens, businesses, and governmental organizations in the execution of geo-tourism initiatives affects sustainable development.
4. Provide strategy and useful suggestions for the growth of ethical and sustainable geo-tourism for the development of tourist destinations based on global experience.

### **Research gap and importance of the study**

Most of the research in the field of geo-tourism and sustainable tourism has been focused mainly on two points. On one side, most works in scientific literature dealt with the economic efficiency of geo-tourism, i.e., the generation of revenue from tourism, regional economic growth, and employment. Meanwhile, certain studies have dedicated themselves to the research of the tasks of cultural and natural heritage protection, ecological sustainability, and resource conservation separately. However, there is little to no research in the existing scientific literature that merges these two important topics, i.e., analyzing the whole system of cultural heritage preservation and sustainable destination management along with economic benefits. However, such circumstances reflect a significant scientific gap in the growth of geotourism. In practice, economic interests usually take precedence, whereas long-term sustainability and heritage conservation issues have a secondary priority, or the strict protection measures restrict the area's economic development when they are implemented.

Therefore it is necessary to objectively find and scientifically establish the balance between economic interests, cultural heritage conservation, and effective management of destination sites, which is a critical challenge. The study presents an essential contribution to the development of geo-tourism through this comprehensive framework. This article examines the interrelationships among economic revenue generation, cultural and geological heritage protection, and sustainable destination management. As such, theoretical and practical foundations are laid for the sustainable, responsible, and long-term development of geo-tourism.

Tourism in recent decades has expanded significantly and is an important sector of the economy of many countries. Nevertheless, the huge growth of tourism has resulted in increasing environmental degradation, destruction of cultural and geological heritage sites, and social problems of local dwellers [1]. A particular criticism in scientific literature in the form of mass tourism theory has been on long-term sustainability, though the scale of short-term economic gain. The foundation of sustainable tourism was laid in response to these challenges, calling for a combination of economic returns on investment, environmental conservation and social benefit from tourism development [2], [3]. From that perspective, geotourism is seen in the context of sustainable tourism which can also promote the promotion and sustainability of tourism and protect the cultural and geological heritage from damage and loss [4]. The chapter focuses on the theoretical introduction of geotourism, the cultural and economic significance of geotourism to

national tourism, and issues concerning its sustainable management as discussed in scientific literature.

### **Moving to sustainable tourism compared to mass tourism**

Mass tourism also has the advantage of large numbers of visitors, the provision of a standardized service and a lot of physical growth. Despite this model promoting economic development in heterogeneous areas, scientific evidence suggests that it has contributed to environmental destruction, the conversion of cultural institutions for commercial use, as well as poor quality of life of local populations [5]. Over-tourism, an excessive number of visitors who stress local infrastructure and resources, is one of the negative effects of mass tourism. Sustainable tourism has emerged as a development of these responses, where sustainability principles are derived with proper resource utilization, respect to local culture, and a recognition of the long-term impacts of tourism activities. As Hall explains the idea of sustainable tourism as being a system including social and economic components at the same time as environmental sustainability. Contemporary research therefore places greater emphasis on long-term sustainable growth vs. short-term financial gain when designing for tourism.

### **Geo-tourism as an integrated model and the role of a tourist destination in sustainable tourism**

Geo-tourism is a key instance of sustainable tourism, attempting to create a tourist activity while protecting the geological and natural characteristics of the region, and the cultural landscape of the area as well [6]. In the scientific literature, geo-tourism is defined not only as a type of travel with geological objects as objects, but as an elaborate system with educational, ecological and cultural significance. Bibliometric analysis: Hernández-Garrido implies that geo-tourism research was descriptive in form until the last few years, with the latest emphasis being placed on governance, collaboration, and sustainable development. It takes into account the 3 major aspects of the research in the area of geo-tourism: Sustainable destination management [7]. According to Dowling, the three essential tenets to geo-tourism are to strengthen the health and well-being of locals, conserve cultural heritage, and promote careful travel. Ng and Sagala and Ruban all mentioned that there were benefits associated with geo-tourism by local development, jobs and economic growth [8]. However, an unregulated and poorly regulated geo-tourism sector could result in heavy over-commercialization, threatening the continued existence of historical sites.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research design**

The study adopted the quantitative research design in this dissertation. This study focuses on finding respondents' perceptions and judgments about the economic benefits of geo-tourism, cultural heritage protection, and sustainable destination management. We selected this approach mainly as an approach to apply numerical measures to the socioeconomic and cultural processes associated with geo-tourism. Since it allows a

systematic comparison among the experiences, opinions, and attitudes of the participants, the survey method is the best fit for gathering empirical data pertinent to the study objectives. The design aims to link existing theoretical contributions on the sustainable growth of geo-tourism with empirical data.

### **Research population and sample**

Study subjects are people who are direct or indirect to geo-tourism. The survey specifically involved local residents, domestic tourists, international tourists, students, and other industry-related ones. A total of 56 subjects participated in the study.

The demographic composition and social status of the respondents were diversified. With that diversity, we could include multiple perspectives on geo-tourism. The age composition of the respondents indicated that the issue of geo-tourism attracted most interest in high-active age groups like those of 18–34 years old. Furthermore, by having respondents having various tourism related roles as their respondent, the relative objectivity of data was ensured at the same time.

### **Data collection process**

Data were collected via an online questionnaire designed using Google Forms. The most important aspects leading up to this platform were its accessibility, ease of use, transparency for respondents, fast data collection, and automatic statistics data presentation. The respondents were provided with the option to select the language of their choice from English, Uzbek, and Russian in their questionnaire completion. In order to enable respondents to speak honestly and objectively, the questionnaire was carried out on an anonymous basis so that all data was collected anonymously. The questionnaire items queried in this study are from the economic, cultural, and environmental dimensions of geo-tourism and drew on these aspects the participants' own experiences and opinions.

### **Research instrument**

For this purpose a specially designed structured questionnaire was included as the research instrument. It included several questions, initially demographic (age, involvement in tourism), followed by experience with geo-tourism, economic benefits, impact on cultural heritage, and sustainability issues. A Likert scale (1–5) was used to determine the respondents' satisfaction with geo-tourism services, environmental management, and sustainability measures. The multiple-choice questions helped to identify priority areas of economic benefits and impact on cultural elements.

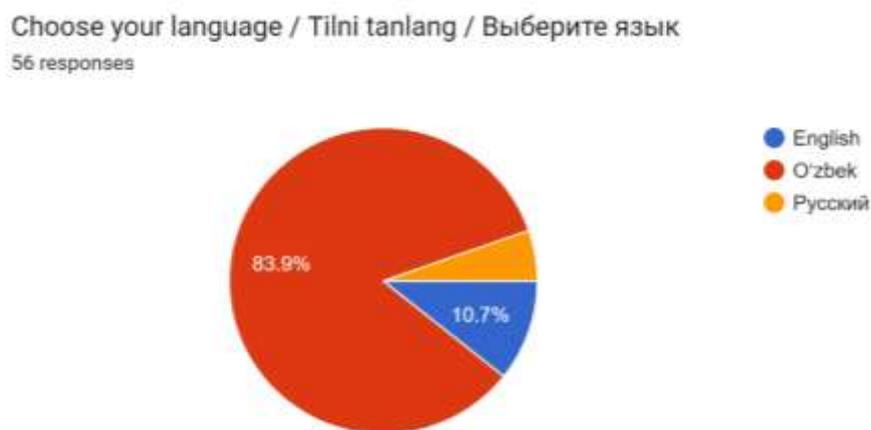
Data collected was analyzed through descriptive statistical analysis. The responses of the respondents were summarized in percentages, frequencies, and diagrams. Visual charts provided by Google Forms served to present the research results in a clear and understandable way. Using some descriptive analysis, general trends were established concerning economic benefits of geo-tourism, attitudes towards cultural heritage, and the need for sustainability measures. These findings are further addressed with respect to the research questions in the subsequent chapter (Results and Discussion).

All ethical aspects of the research process were adhered to. The poll was entirely voluntary and no personal details on respondents were collected. Confidentiality and anonymity improved the respondents' responses' dependability. However, there were some limitations to the study. To a degree, the findings cannot be extrapolated because of the limited sample size and the subjective nature of the data. Nonetheless, the information gathered provides a solid empirical foundation for examining the problem of geotourism's sustainable growth.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Respondent profile

The Google Forms survey was completed by 56 participants in this study. Uzbek, English, and Russian were the three languages in which the survey was offered, so respondents may select the language in which they felt most comfortable. Based on the results, the majority of respondents selected Uzbek [8]. In actuality, 83.9% of participants finished the survey in Uzbek. Because there was a local interest in geotourism, the study was mostly carried out for the local population. Furthermore, 10.7% of survey participants chose English, and a minor proportion chose Russian. This means respondents with English backgrounds are the most likely participants expressing an opinion on behalf of the international community/experience. We find fewer responses in Russian in this study, suggesting that these groups were comparatively underrepresented in the current study [9], [10]. Typically, and in general, findings in this particular language breakdown show that the study was local, but also included quite a few international views. This means that some regional characteristics of respondents' opinions need to be accounted for in the analysis.



**Figure 1.** Derived from Google Forms Survey

A relevant methodological issue arose, however, during the survey data analysis. Since most respondents completed the survey in Uzbek, only the English responses were fully reflected in the Power BI (PBI) and SPSS programs during their import and analysis of our data [11], [12]. Responses in Uzbek were not fully or, rather, were only partially reflected in these programs. This necessitated the treatment of data that makes up most of the research results. This implies that the source for the analysis was, since the majority of the responding people answered in Uzbek, the diagrams and graphs generated from the Google Forms platform automatically were selected for analysis. Thus, the graphs of all these responses capture their very essence, no matter their wording [13]. Therefore, based on the automatic visual analysis tools provided by Google Forms, the results and analyses of this chapter were prepared, thus providing a uniform method of displaying the respondents' perspectives on a broader scale. This preserved the consistency of the study's methodology and ensured that the answers of all respondents were collected. Overall, the results of the language breakdown show that although the study was localized, the perspective was limited to the international. The particular regional characteristics of respondents' opinions make this more important for further analysis.

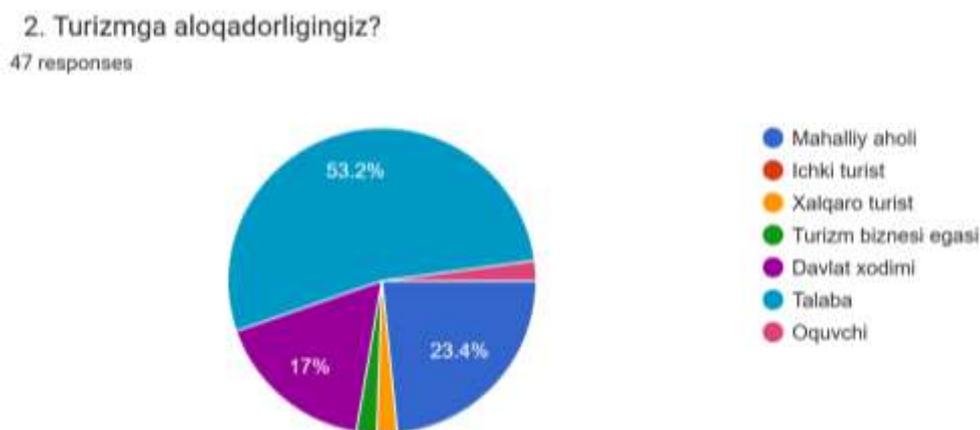


Figure 2. The Google Forms survey

Results of the survey show that respondents have a wide diversity of involvement in the tourism industry. In the diagram, students, comprising 53.2% of the total response, are the largest group of respondents. This shows that young people in academic institutions are interested in geotourism [14]. With a contribution of 23.4%, the local population is the second most dominating group. Given the high level of local involvement, geotourism is strongly linked to local growth and interests. To evaluate the wider social and economic significance of geotourism, this demographic factor is essential. Moreover, 17 percent of such respondents are government employees. This group may provide different insights on tourism policy making, administration, and politics [15]. The tiny remaining share comes from domestic tourists, international tourists, tourism business owners, and students. However, a very low level of

participation means the findings of these researchers rely on the opinions of local and educational environment participants.

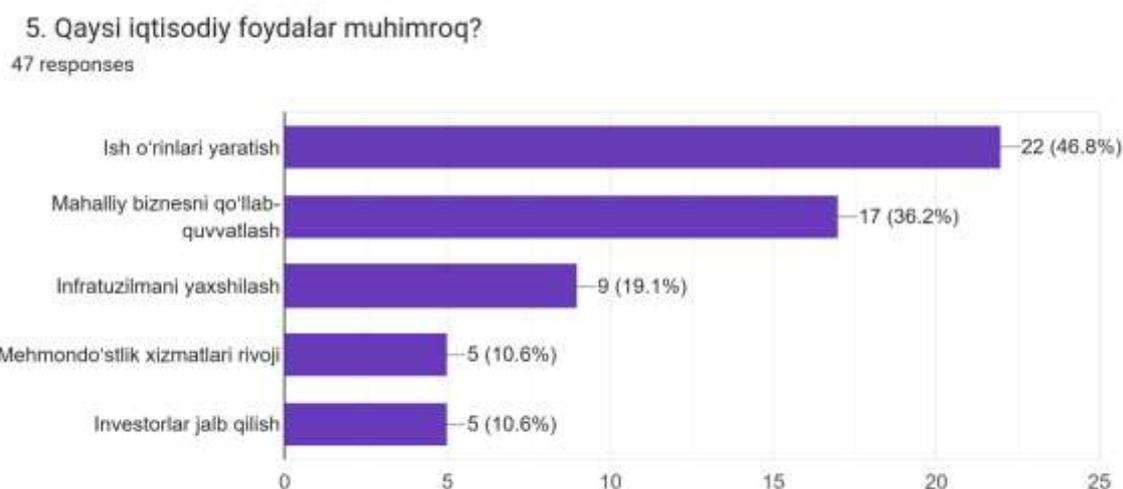
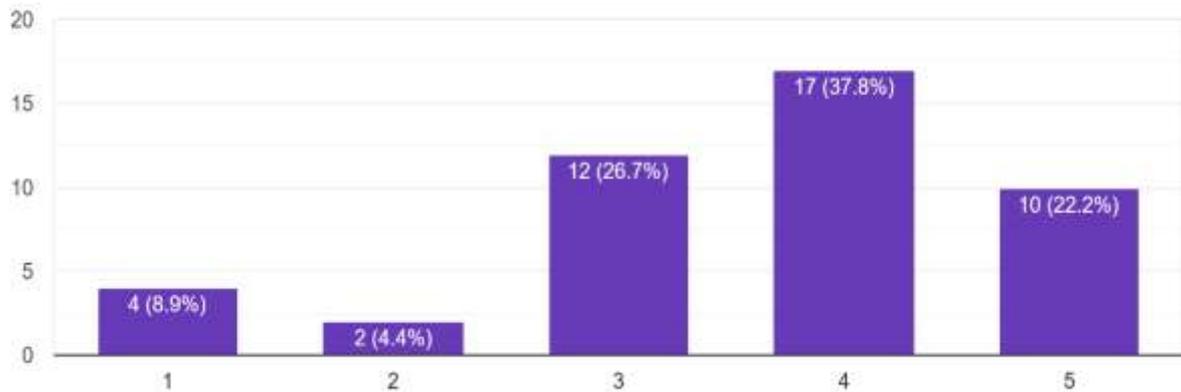


Figure 3. Derived from Google Forms

We asked the survey respondents which economic benefits they felt were the most vital through geo-tourism. The socio-economic benefits of geo-tourism are found largely to be local and well documented in the findings. According to the data sketch, 46.8% (22) of the respondents say the jobs generated as a result of geo-tourism are the most important economic gain arising from geo-tourism. It suggests the importance of geo-tourism in providing jobs to the local population and increasing income in that community as well. Supporting local businesses ranks second. This alternative was selected by 36.2% (17) of those surveyed [15], [16]. This implies that geo-tourism is a factor in the development of small and medium-sized businesses; it also supports crafts and the local service sector. 19.1% (9) of respondents also listed the use of geo-tourism as a major benefit by improving infrastructure. That indicates that roads, transportation, information systems, and facilities need to be built around tourist attractions. Fewer respondents identified the development of hospitality services and attracting investors as significant economic benefits (both received 10.6% (5 votes)). This indicates that geo-tourism is also already more associated with social and local economic dimensions, but big investments are increasingly taken as a non-factor at this stage [17]. Taken altogether, findings provide further evidence that geo-tourism is recognized by participants as a sustainable development strategy with a positive impact on employment and local economies.

6. Hozirgi turizm xizmatlaridan qanchalik mamnunsiz?

45 responses



**Figure 4.** See below image taken from Google Forms

Satisfaction and satisfaction level of current tourism services. On a 5-point Likert scale (1 being extremely low and 5 being very high), survey respondents indicated how satisfied they were with the existing tourism services. Findings: The respondents' general level of satisfaction ranged from moderate to high. According to the statistics, 17 respondents, or 37.8%, gave tourism services a score of 4. It indicates that existing services are usually satisfactory but there is still scope for improvement. Further, 22.2% (10) of the respondents were very satisfied with the services and scored 5. Secondly, 26.7% (12) rated the quality of services as average (3) of respondents. This means that service quality is stable but not comprehensive. Not quite so many respondents selected low ratings: 8.9% (4) 1 point rating, 4.4% (2) 2 points. Overall, the results show a positive bias among the respondents towards modern tourism services. Average and low ratings, however, also indicate a need for additional improvement in terms of their quality of services, information provision, infrastructure, and level of services. This indicates that continuous enhancement of the quality of service is one of the essential and crucial aspects of the sustainable development process of geo-tourism.

## CONCLUSION

**Fundamental Finding :** Geotourism is an important form of sustainable tourism that may conserve geological sites and guarantee local economic development as well as social stability, as demonstrated through the literature review results. The empirical research (survey) results confirmed these theoretical views in practice. Most participants recognized that geo-tourism is an economic boon to the area. Job creation and the contribution to supporting local business seemed in fact to be particularly important economic benefits of geo-tourism. Cultural heritage was also found to be perceived by the respondents as being important for the establishment of geotourism. At the end of

the day of which study, we obtained that we found that there is a balance of the economic benefits and heritage protection and sustainable management is necessary for successful development of geotourism. **Implication** : It emphasizes geo-tourism development from an economic, cultural heritage and sustainable destination management standpoint. This finding also suggests that it is necessary to conceptualize geotourism not just as a natural resource-based activity, but also a culturally, traditionally, locally life oriented system of activity. It suggests that in a sense of this phenomenon geotourism is increasingly seen as a sustainable and inclusive economic model. **Limitation** : At the same time the moderate rating of the environmental sustainability and quality and services on tourism show the need to improve geotourism. **Future Research** : A key aspect of the scientific literature is that successful geotourism is generally based on effective management, stakeholder participation, and long-term planning.

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