TERRITORIAL POTENTIAL AND ORGANIZATION OF GASTRONOMIC TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE FERGANA TOURIST REGION

Sultonov Mexriddin Zuxriddin
Samarkand Agroinnovations and Research University
sultonovm849@gmail.com

Abstract: *The article examines the territorial potential and organizational features of gastronomic tourism development in the Fergana tourist region. Gastronomic resources are classified and tourism infrastructure is assessed using statistical data. Gastronomic routes and a cluster model integrating resource, production, service, tourism, marketing, and outcome blocks are proposed.*

Keywords: *gastronomic tourism, territorial organization, tourism resources, Fergana Valley, agrotourism, tourist route, gastronomic cluster.*

Annotatsiya: *Mazkur maqolada Farg‘ona turistik regionida gastronomik turizmni rivojlantirishning hududiy salohiyati va tashkil etish xususiyatlari tadqiq etilgan. Gastronomik resurslar tasniflangan, turizm infratuzilmasining hududiy holati statistik ma’lumotlar asosida baholangan. Gastronomik marshrutlar va resurs, ishlab chiqarish, xizmat, turizm, marketing hamda natija bloklaridan iborat klaster modeli taklif etilgan.*

Kalit so‘zlar: *gastronomik turizm, hududiy tashkil etish, turistik resurslar, Farg‘ona vodiysi, agroturizm, turistik marshrut, gastronomik klaster.*

Аннотация: *В статье исследованы территориальный потенциал и особенности организации гастрономического туризма в Ферганском туристическом регионе. Проведена классификация гастрономических ресурсов и статистическая оценка туристской инфраструктуры. Предложены гастрономические маршруты и кластерная модель, объединяющая ресурсный, производственный, сервисный, туристский, маркетинговый и результативный блоки.*

Ключевые слова: *гастрономический туризм, территориальная организация, туристские ресурсы, Ферганская долина, агротуризм, туристский маршрут, гастрономический кластер.*

Introduction. Today, tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the global economy and occupies an important place in the socio-economic development of countries and regions [3]. The growing demand for tourism services and the diversification of travelers' needs are driving the development of specialized directions, such as gastronomic tourism, alongside traditional forms of tourism. Gastronomic tourism is attracting increasing interest, as it makes it possible to present the local population's way of life, national values, and traditional cuisine as a tourism product. According to the latest data from the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the number of tourist trips made by foreign citizens to the country increased from 1,881.3 thousand to 11,679.6 thousand between 2021 and 2025 — an increase of almost 6.2 times — while the number of domestic tourist trips rose from 116.3 million to 137.7 million. Over the same period, the number of operating tourism firms and organizations grew from 288 to 869, more than a threefold increase [10]. Such rapid institutional growth creates favorable conditions for the systematic introduction of new, specialized tourism products, including gastronomic tourism.

The Fergana tourist region — a unified tourist space uniting the Fergana, Andijan, and Namangan provinces — holds significant potential for developing gastronomic tourism owing to its dense population, ancient cities, developed agriculture and horticulture, and preserved traditions of national cuisine. At the same time, the fact that existing gastronomic resources are not used systematically for tourism purposes, that their territorial distribution and connection with tourist routes have not been sufficiently studied, and that a comparative analysis of the region's tourism potential relative to other regions is lacking, underscores the relevance of the problem [7].

The aim of the study is to identify the territorial characteristics of gastronomic tourism development in the Fergana tourist region, to assess existing resources and tourism potential on the basis of statistical data, and to develop scientifically grounded practical recommendations on promising directions for development.

Materials and methods. The object of the study is the process of gastronomic tourism formation in the Fergana tourist region, while the subject is its territorial characteristics, factors, resources, and development opportunities. The research employed geographical, comparative-geographical, statistical, analytical, cartographic, sociological survey, expert assessment, and SWOT-analysis methods, as well as GIS/GAT technologies to analyze the territorial distribution of gastronomic sites [6]. A weighted-scoring approach was applied for the

comprehensive assessment of gastronomic tourism potential: GSI = ΣWi × Xi, where GSI is the gastronomic tourism potential index, Wi is the weight coefficient of the criterion, and Xi is the region's score for that criterion (on a 5-point scale). The statistical and empirical basis of the study consisted of regional data from the official press release of the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on tourism and recreation development for 2025 — namely, the number of tourism firms and organizations, the number of persons served, the number of tourist vouchers sold, and the number of accommodation facility sites and persons accommodated [10].

Results and discussion. The analysis showed that it is appropriate to divide the gastronomic resource base of the Fergana tourist region into six groups: ready-made dishes, local food products, gastronomic heritage and traditions, gastronomic sites (restaurants, markets, farms), gastronomic events (festivals), and rural and agro-gastronomic resources [8]. Such a classification makes it possible to identify the region's broad territorial resource base, rather than limiting gastronomic tourism to the activities of catering enterprises alone.

Table 1. Key tourism indicators of the provinces of the Fergana tourist region

Indicator (2025)	Fergana	Andijan	Namangan	Uzbekistan (total)
Number of tourism firms and organizations, units	30	12	9	869
Number of persons served, thousand people	20.0	4.0	6.4	1,981.7
Number of tourist vouchers sold, thousand units	13.7	3.9	6.5	706.9
Number of accommodation facility sites, units	167	113	87	3,644
Number of persons accommodated, thousand people	194.5	102.6	124.5	4,356.1

Source: compiled by the author based by cite www.stat.uz

A comparative analysis across the region revealed differences among the provinces. In Fergana province (Kokand, Margilan, Rishton), there is high potential for combining historical-cultural and craft resources with gastronomic services; in Andijan province, there is potential to turn national cuisine traditions into a tourism product; while in Namangan province, there are broader opportunities for integrating gastronomic tourism with modern infrastructure and festivals [5]. These differences indicate the need for an approach based on territorial specialization rather than a single, uniform model for the region.

To more accurately assess the region's existing tourism-institutional potential, official data from the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2025 were analyzed (Table 1).

Analysis of the data presented revealed an important trend: the Fergana, Andijan, and Namangan provinces together account for approximately 10.1% of the country's accommodation facility sites (367 out of 3,644) and 9.7% of persons accommodated (421.6 thousand out of 4,356.1 thousand people), yet only 3.4% of tourist vouchers sold (24.1 thousand out of 706.9 thousand units) [10]. This disproportion indicates that although the region's accommodation infrastructure is relatively well developed, the system for selling tourism products in an organized (packaged) form remains underdeveloped, and specialized gastronomic tour packages are practically absent.



Figure 1. *Territorial-cluster model for developing gastronomic tourism in the Fergana tourist region.*

According to the SWOT analysis, the region's strengths include the diversity of national dishes, ancient gastronomic traditions, agricultural products, and a culture of hospitality; its weaknesses include the absence of a unified electronic database, inconsistent service standards, and — as confirmed by the statistical analysis above — the underdeveloped system of gastronomic routes and tour packages [4]. Opportunities include gastronomic routes, agro-gastronomic tourism, and digital marketing, while threats relate to the loss of traditional recipes and excessive commercialization.

Based on the study, four gastronomic tourist routes were proposed: the 'Gastronomic Heritage of the Fergana Valley' (Tashkent–Kokand–Rishton–Margilan–Fergana), the 'Gastronomic Heritage of Andijan' (city market – national cuisine – farm), the 'Namangan–Chust Gastronomic-Ethnographic Route,' and the 'From Farm to Table' agro-gastronomic route. In addition, a six-block gastronomic cluster model was developed, consisting of resource, production, service, tourism,

marketing, and outcome blocks (Figure 1); it enables the integration of gastronomic tourism with several sectors of the local economy.

Conclusion. The study showed that the Fergana tourist region has sufficient resources and infrastructural foundations for developing gastronomic tourism (a total of 367 accommodation sites and 421.6 thousand persons accommodated), yet the degree to which this potential has been converted into an organized tourism product remains statistically low (only 3.4% of vouchers sold). On this basis, the following practical recommendations were developed: create an electronic cadastre of the region's gastronomic resources and map them using GIS; establish a unified system of gastronomic routes and tour packages covering the Fergana, Andijan, and Namangan territories; incorporate agro-gastronomic routes and national cuisine master-classes into tourism programs; include gastronomic festivals in a unified tourism calendar; promote local products as tourism brands and souvenirs; strengthen the training system for specialized service and guiding personnel; and encourage tourism firms and organizations to develop tour packages specialized in the gastronomic direction. The proposed assessment criteria, the GSI index, the statistical analysis, the routes, and the cluster model can serve as a methodological basis for the scientifically grounded organization of gastronomic tourism in the region.

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