

**ANALYSING AND IMPROVING OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM INDUSTRY IN UZBEKISTAN**

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**ANNOTATION**

Tourism is playing a significant role in the world economy and people's lives, which leads the state and society to develop appropriate laws, decisions and Uzbekistan is no exception.

**Keywords:** economy, tourism, foreign investment, the Great Silk Road, health care, strategy.

**Introduction**

Today, we should identify efficient ways of developing country's economy and implement them in real life in the process of liberalizing economy and deepening reforms. By this, it is considered as a high priority to create job positions for population and to achieve increasing their income. At the same time, the main recognition is directed to the development of the tourism industry in Uzbekistan, and its provision by world standards. The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev on January 8, 2019 at a video conference on the implementation of investment projects, emphasize tasks in the social complex of the Cabinet of Ministers, and to strengthen attracting foreign direct investments to the tourism field [1-13]. He also said in his speech, "We are gradually creating all the conditions and providing a wide range of investments and opportunities for foreign investors. In the last year, 2019 it had been a turning point in the development of tourism. The industry of tourism was not considered as a significant factor contributing to the economic development of Uzbekistan. Nevertheless, considering the geographic position of the country and resources of tourism, it was seen that the industry could be important contributing component towards economic development. Since gaining its sovereignty in 1991, Uzbekistan started to construct and re-organize its infrastructure of the industry. The initial stage related to the issues of tourism industry was establishment of National Committee "Uzbektourism" which is the leading body in terms of controlling tourism activities throughout the country. The Committee provides all the needed changes and modernizations to the industry in the area of Uzbekistan. After the foundation of the Committee, the country has been reforming its local air fleet and roads. Tax exemptions were installed and the system of taking tourist activity licenses were modernized. The private and government-controlled companies, which provide tourist services, were exempted from paying VAT (Value Added Tax). These factors contributed to a significant growth in the tourism sector of Uzbekistan. The geographic location along the Great Silk Road provides the growth in the number of international arrivals. Furthermore, rich heritage of culture, ancient traditions and history draw attention among tourists who are interested in the sphere of religion, culture, archeology and ethnography. Uzbekistan has valuable spots of Islam, Christianity and Buddhism, which provides the development of pilgrimage tourism. Moreover, access to attractive natural spots (mountains, desserts, lakes,) can be considered a remarkable factor in the way

of the advancement of adventure and eco-tourism. Nevertheless, only 5-8% part of natural and cultural heritage is used for tourism activities which indicates that the potential of tourism is not fully used. The Silk Road spots in Uzbekistan – Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva. This factor, also triggers the growth of international visits in Uzbekistan. Introducing Uzbekistan into the market of global tourism, the agencies involved in the tourism industry use the link of Uzbekistan and Silk Road. The Uzbekistan International Visitor Economy Survey 2014 by the World Tourism Organization, showed respondents frequently noted inconveniences. These included problems with the payments system (especially lack of access to cash via ATM), Internet problems (little access to Wi-Fi and slow speed), limited English translation of signage and tourist information at tourist attractions, and electricity outages.<sup>xxvi</sup> Furthermore, as noted in an interview with a local tour guide conducted by Silk Road New Observation News Agency, concerns about the wholesomeness of food products, the availability and quality of medical services, and the lack of clean, modern 68 public restrooms are frequently cited [14-30]. Because of the often poor medical services in outlying areas, tourists who fall ill in these locales need to be moved swiftly to Tashkent's international hospital.

Simplification of the visa regime between countries, ensuring the mobility of citizens, reduces the cost of registration increases the flow of foreign tourists.

In 2018, Uzbekistan introduced a visa-free regime for citizens of 9 countries, in 2019 for citizens of 47 countries, in 2020 - 2021 another 5 countries. As of May 10, 2021, the number of countries for citizens of which a visa-free regime is granted in the Republic of Uzbekistan is 90 countries.

In addition, citizens of about 80 countries have the opportunity to apply for an electronic visa in a simplified manner. Five new types of visas have been introduced for foreigners: "Compatriot", "Student", "Academic", "Medicine" and "Pilgrimage". According to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the simplification of the visa regime has yielded positive results. In particular, in 2019, if the average growth in the number of foreign tourists was 26%, then the growth rate among the countries where the visa-free regime was introduced reached 58%.

At the same time, the practice whereby a tour group will wait for the patient to recover and then depart the country all together can produce large costs and additional concerns for fellow tourists and their travel agency as they wait for the patient's treatment to end. At present, ecotourism, ecotourism, medical and cultural tourism are widely developed in Uzbekistan.

At the beginning of 2016, a process of radical reform of the tourism industry was launched in Uzbekistan. Transformations in the field of tourism were named as one of the strategic directions for the development of the national economy, which can ensure the accelerated development of regions.

The analysis showed a positive dynamic of growth in tourism. So, in 2016-2019, there was a significant increase in the number of foreign tourists visiting Uzbekistan. For comparison, if in 2016, 2 million foreign tourists visited the country, in 2019 their number increased 3.3 times and reached 6.7 million. In 2018, the number of foreign tourists increased - by 98% compared to 2017, and the number of companies and organizations engaged in tourism activities - by 131%.

It is notable that the growth in the number of tourists from different regions occurs in different ways. For example, the number of visitors from Central Asian countries increased by an average of 22-25% per year, while the annual growth among tourists from non-CIS countries was 50%.

At the same time, positive results were noted in domestic tourism. Compared to 2016, the number of domestic tourists in 2019 almost doubled and amounted to 14.7 million.

Uzbekistan has not yet shown its full potential in the field of tourism, as there are more than 9,608 cultural facilities in the country. Of these, more than 8,200 are ancient architectural and archeological sites, 200 of which are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Most of them are located in Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Shakhrisabz, Termez, Kokand and Tashkent.

Currently, the National System of Protected Natural Areas includes 8 nature reserves, 2 natural and 1 national parks, 1 biosphere reserve, 7 natural monuments, 3 natural nurseries, 12 nature reserves, more than 25 water protection zones, coastal strips and groundwater formation zone, 72 Forestiers and 5 forest state forest hunting farms. The system of protected natural areas covers 3.5% of steppe ecosystems, about 3% of peaceful forests and 14% of mountain ecosystems.

In recent years, a number of practical steps for the development of tourism in Uzbekistan have been developed and implemented by presidential and government decrees, but the coronavirus pandemic, which has brought hard times to the tourism industry and its participants around the world, has also affected Uzbekistan. 'did not miss the secret. This, of course, has led to a decline in the flow of tourists and a decline in the income of representatives of the service category operating in the area (hotels, restaurants, resorts, etc.).

Given that the tourism industry is suffering the most due to the pandemic, it includes:

- Hotel business;
- Restaurants;
- Tour operators;

Air and other passenger transport sectors.

In this regard, the government has introduced tax and other benefits for industry representatives (in accordance with the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated February 9, 2021 "On measures to further develop domestic and pilgrimage tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan") and preferences have been extended until December 31, 2021):

- reduction of the income tax rate for tour operators, travel agents, as well as accommodation facilities by 50% compared to the established rate;
- Partial subsidization of air and rail tickets by 30% of the ticket price for foreign tourist groups of at least 10 people, provided that they organize a tour in Uzbekistan and spend at least five nights in their accommodation;
- for tour operators, travel agents and entities providing hotel services (accommodation services) in the field of tourism:
  - a) Exemption from payment of land tax from legal entities and property tax from legal entities;
  - b) Setting the social tax paid by legal entities at a reduced rate of 1%.

Until December 31, 2021, penalties for overdue receivables on foreign trade transactions with tour operators, travel agents and accommodation facilities will be suspended (these benefits were introduced by Presidential Decree No. 6002 of 28 May 2020).

We believe that one of the most pressing issues today is the information and creation of the necessary conditions for the introduction of our national tourism products to the world market and the optimization of their movement in the market, which determines the strategy of sustainable development of tourism. Achieving this level should be based on in-depth knowledge of economic relations, marketing activities, market research in domestic and foreign tourism activities [31-43]. The service sector in tourism is also a growing sector of the economy. In the long run, Uzbek tourism

can enter the market of regional and world tourism services among the most competitive countries, not limited to the achievements of the national economy.

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