

MAIN ISSUES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract

The tourism is one of the fastest growing and profitable sectors of the economy in the world, which, among other things, can act as a link for strengthening international socio-economic, cultural and spiritual ties. To be one of the most important sectors of the country's economy with a rich cultural and historical potential, Uzbekistan shows great interest in the development of this sector of economy and brings it to a higher, world-standard level.

This article researches the main factors hindering the rapid development of tourism and recreation services in the country and provides an in-depth analysis of the most important and relevant issues in the industry.

Keywords: tourism, tourism potential, tourism infrastructure, tourism issues, service, route, tourist map, tourism development, transport.

INTRODUCTION

The largest country by population in the Central Asian region, the Republic of Uzbekistan ranks first in the region with a total population of just over 36 million people [1]. Being one of the most important sectors of the country's economy with a rich cultural and historical potential, Uzbekistan shows great interest in the development of the tourism industry. Moreover, the country has a large, fully unrealized potential in the development of tourism, as it has both historical architectural masterpieces recognized in world history and tourist attractions with modern architectural facades. There are 4 historical centers in Uzbekistan in Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva (Ichan Kala) and Shakhrisabz with unique historical monuments and monuments; and Chatkal Nature Reserve, a natural attraction in the mountains of Western Tan Shan in Tashkent region, which are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List [2]. There are also other attractions in the republic to attract tourists, such as eight nature reserves, two natural parks, more than 50 reservoirs, about 350 cultural and recreation facilities and many other recreation areas. [3].

In modern realities, the tourism industry is rapidly developing and growing rapidly. Tourism in recent years has become an important factor not only for the economies of individual states, but also for world trade and significant in the global economy. Thus, tourism is gradually becoming a routine in the lifestyle of the average citizen, while caring for the environment, the ideas of "green" tourism are the main driving forces of modern global tourism.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

One of the significant tasks in the development strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan 2022-2026 is the development of tourism and strengthening its role in the economy. In recent decades, tourism has increasingly been recognized as one of the "key nodes" of the national economy, having a direct positive impact on the development of related industries with a high multiplier effect. In order to bring the industry to a new, more developed and competitive level, it is necessary to solve a number of main tasks related, firstly, to the local infrastructure, and secondly, to the quality of services provided at the national level.

This article presents the main aspects of the development of tourism in Uzbekistan along with the main problems and factors that have a direct impact on the growth and development of this sphere in the country.

LITERATURE ANALYSIS AND METHODOLOGY

The works and studies of the following scientists M. Rainoldi, V. Drischer, A. Lisnevskaya, D. Zvereva, A. Stavinska, J. Relota and R. Egger (2018) focus on modern innovative approaches in the field of marketing development in tourism. The works of J. D. Akhmedov and J. F. Abdurashidov (2021), N. G. Muminov (2022) describe the theoretical and methodological foundations of tourism development, key factors and their role in national strategic planning. The issue of the formation and sale of tourist products, as well as the development of a competitive environment abroad and in Uzbekistan, was considered by B. M. scientists. Halmatzhonova (2020), M.V. Voloshinova and V.V. Zagorskaya (2021), F. Egamberdiev (2022). These works also focus on the development of the country's tourism industry during the COVID-19 pandemic. The publications of scientists B.S. Safarov (2016), Z. Usmonova, A. Alimov (2020), Z. S. Abriev (2022) analyze the problem of tourism development in modern realities.

To solve the tasks set, the authors used the methods of scientific abstraction for in-depth analysis and research of this field of activity, induction and deduction to derive correct conclusions, positive and normative analysis in order to compare current indicators with norms and norms in this area of economics, extrapolation, generalization, comparative analysis and a systematic approach to achieve the necessary results.

results

From a socio-economic point of view, Uzbekistan is a dynamically developing country in transition to market relations. Uzbekistan's GDP per capita exceeded the \$2,000 mark in 2022, with the dominance of the service sector in the GDP structure with a share of 39% [4].

The contribution of tourism to the structure of the country's GDP is very low with an indicator of less than 1% (0.7%), which decreased both in relative and absolute values when compared with indicators before COVID-19 (Table 1). If in 2019 the gross domestic product in the tourism sector was equal to 14 billion soums, then in 2021, due to quarantine restrictions at home and abroad, this figure significantly decreased to the level of 5 billion soums, although nominal GDP continued to grow [4].

In the period before the entry into force of quarantine restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2018-19, the number of foreign tourists visiting Uzbekistan reached its historical maximum in the region of 8.5 million people, however, due to the pandemic, this level decreased several times (Fig.1) [5].

In addition, it is noted that the number of people traveling abroad to meet their tourist needs increased sharply in 2018 compared to the previous year, but decreased by more than 4 times during the quarantine period.

However, there are a number of problems that act as a deterrent to the development of the tourism industry within the country. These unsolved problems can be divided into the following categories, which include [10,12]:

- Insufficient level of tourism infrastructure development;
- Low level of training and professionalism of the staff serving tourists, which is below the level of requirements of international standards. This is revealed by a large number of firms and organizations registered with the state tax committee in the form of individual enterprises (IE), with a small number of employees (5-8 employees). In such organizations, the founders do not seek to invest capital to train staff and attract highly qualified specialists;
- An inefficient management system, which is expressed in the absence of communication between tourist destinations and, as a result, the impossibility of forming combined tourist packages designed for a long-term vacation. Since the distances between cities are relatively large (more than 300 km), tourists are not able to visit several places in one trip. This indicates the need to form a single regional tourism cluster, which will allow to establish cooperation between the regions of the country, integrate economically underdeveloped regions into this sphere and stimulate the creation of special offers, including visits to several places.
- Low quality and monotony of the services provided in the industry. Many tourist organizations offer monotonous tours, the difference of which is mostly the final destination. The sector is also characterized by relative inflexibility compared to other industries. For example, this is expressed by the difficulty of finding and choosing alternative leisure activities when weather conditions change or other unforeseen circumstances occur.

In addition, a prerequisite for the development of recreational resources and tourism clusters in general is the availability of modern tourist infrastructure. Its unique feature is the service of tourists and locals. Thus, stimulating the development of tourist infrastructure in the localities will also contribute to improving the living conditions of the inhabitants of this area. In addition, the tourist infrastructure is one of the ways to increase the employment of the able-bodied population by creating new jobs.

The following infrastructural factors can be distinguished, which are generally related to transport [6,9]:

o' Quality of transport services provided ;

about A road network that has shortcomings in traffic requirements both in terms of capacity and technical condition;

about High tariffs of transport companies;

a very high level of illegal ("gray") transport services, especially at passenger arrival points (train stations, airports);

o Shortage of qualified specialists in all areas of the transport system. This is especially evident in the state of public transport in regional centers and beyond.

Transport infrastructure plays an important role in the development of tourism, however, there are many unresolved issues concerning information and communication (digital) infrastructure, which requires special attention in the era of digitalization. It can include [11,12,16]:

- low level of technical and technological support and a shortage of the necessary amount of modern communication technologies, which as a result affects low Internet speed and low broadband network coverage outside regional centers;

- insufficient investment in the industry;

- insufficient number of tourist information centers in several languages;

- non-proliferation of online booking and reservation;

- non-intensive use of interactive technologies (virtual tours through Internet portals, maps, information stands).

conclusion

In conclusion, it should be noted that the materials studied above, which cover a wide range of theoretical and practical areas of tourism development, including problems and challenges in this area, stimulate more in-depth research and analysis of Uzbekistan's economic policy in this area, as well as potential approaches to implementing successful foreign experience in overcoming existing issues.

Thus, issues related to tourism infrastructure, including transport, communications, are the main reason for the decline in Uzbekistan's competitiveness in the world market of tourist services.

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