

STATUS AND TENDENCIES OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN UZBEKISTAN

Soatov Yusuf Xojayor ugli

Independent researcher of Tashkent State University of Economics

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Abstract. *The tourism industry is one of the fastest growing industries in recent years. According to the forecasts of the World Tourism Organization (WTO), tourism has come second to the oil and machine industries. In recent years, the tourism industry has become one of the leading sectors of the rapidly developing economy in Uzbekistan. Due to its rich cultural and historical heritage, the number of tourists in Uzbekistan is increasing every year.*

Keywords: *Uzbek tourism, cultural tourism, soft tourism, tourism infrastructure.*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the tourism sector is one of the leading sectors of the rapidly developing economy in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan has its own rich cultural and historical heritage, unique art of architecture. Ancient historical monuments in the cities of Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Tashkent, Shahrisabz and Termiz are the foundation of tourism in Uzbekistan. Currently, there are more than 8200 objects of cultural heritage in our country, about 200 of which are protected by UNESCO and included in the list of historical objects. In particular, the Ichan Castle in Khiva was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1990, the historical center of Bukhara in 1993, the historical center of Shahrisabz in 2000, and the city of Samarkand in 2001.

ANALYSIS OF LITERATURE ON THE SUBJECT

Some aspects of the scientific researches of scientists of our country such as N.T. Tukhliyev, I.S.Tuxliyev, M.Q.Pardayev, A.S.Soliyev, B.To'rayev, M.M.Muxammedov, M.R.Usmonov, D.K.Usmanova, M.T.Alimova, Q.X.Abduraxmanov, Ye.V.Golisheva, N.E.Ibadullayev, O.X.Hamidov, M.Xoshimov, A.N. Norchayev have been studied.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The results of the scientific research of national and foreign scientists, who were engaged in the analysis of the problems of effective development of tourism in Uzbekistan, served as the theoretical and methodological basis of this research. In the preparation of the article, abstract and analytical observation, comparative and factor analysis, indicative, selective observation, comparison, economic-statistical and other methods were used.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

According to the information provided by the Statistics Agency under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, today, the total number of material cultural heritage objects in our republic is 8210. 7827 of them are state property, and 383 are private property. Of these:

Archaeological monuments – 4797;
Architectural monuments – 2266;
Monumental art monuments – 617;
Attractions – 530.

Among them, 530 (6.5 % of the total material cultural heritage objects) are attractions. See table 1.1.

Table 1.1

(Objects of material and cultural heritage in the cross-section of regions)

№	In the section of regions	The number of objects of material cultural heritage	Number of objects of attractions
1.	Tashkent city	354	156
2.	Republic of Karakalpakstan	288	45
3.	Samarkand	1607	34
4.	Bukhara	829	18
5.	Khorezm	259	15
6.	Tashkent region	828	12
7.	Kashkadarya	1468	28
8.	Surkhandarya	561	15
9.	Andijan	422	85
10.	Ferghana	376	88
11.	Namangan	274	10
12.	Navoi	437	5
13.	Jizzakh	427	8
14.	Syr Darya	78	4

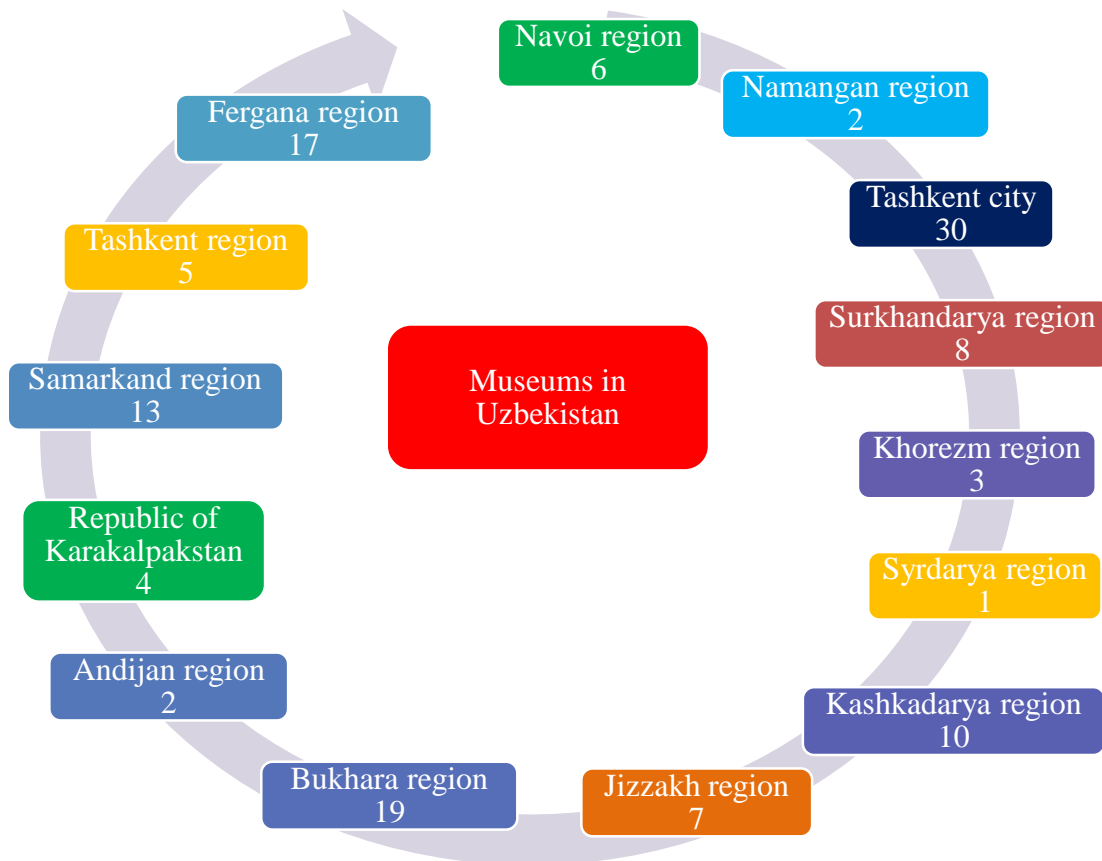
The economy of Uzbekistan has been developing rapidly in recent years. We can see that the Gross domestic product (GDP) in 2023 increased by 100 %, in the field of Industrial Economy by 106 %, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries by 104.1 %, Services by 113.7 % compared to January-December 2022. Among the types of services, if we look at the statistics on the provision of services for tourists who came to museums, in 2020-2022, 3.6 million tourists from abroad visited museums in Uzbekistan. In particular, in 2020-2022, a total of 221.9 billion soums were received. Of this, 165.8 billion soums are allocated from the budget, 56 billion are extra-budgetary funds. By now, the total volume of exhibits in the museum is 2.17 million.

In museums in Uzbekistan, it is noted that the number of exhibits in museums by types is as follows:

- Painting - 25.6 thousand;
- Graphics - 56.2 thousand;
- Sculpture - 4.4 thousand;
- Applied art - 76.3 thousand;
- Numismatics - 292.6 thousand;
- Archaeological - 387.0 thousand;
- Photos - 265.4 thousand;
- Documents - 280.5 thousand;
- Household and ethnographic items - 72.5 thousand;
- Other exhibits - 707.8 thousand.

According to the information of the Cultural Heritage Agency, there are a total of 2 553 056 museum objects and collections in the funds of the republic's museums. Of these, 1 928 012 are museum objects and collections in the main fund, and 625 044 are in the scientific-assistant fund. 112 000 of the exhibits kept in the museums are considered unique in the world. See table 1.2.

Table 1.2



In Uzbekistan, state programs are being adopted to develop the tourism sector and raise it to new levels. According to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated April 20, 2022 No. 113, in the 35th goal of Uzbekistan's development strategy for 2022-2026, the following several goals are envisaged as part of the "Travel around Uzbekistan" program:

- increasing the number of local tourists from 12 million and increasing the number of foreign tourists visiting the republic to 9 million,
- wide introduction of barrier-free tourism infrastructure in the main tourism cities of the country,
- to double the number of people employed in tourism by 2026, increasing them to 520 000 people,
- adoption of the state program on the development of the infrastructure of tourism and cultural heritage objects and the effective use of more than 8 thousand cultural heritage objects,
- construction of additional tourist zones and recreation centers in Zomin, Forish, Bakhmal districts and "Aydar-Arnasoy" lake system,
- implementation of projects worth 300 million US dollars,
- creating 25 000 jobs,
- to increase the volume of tourism services at least 10 times in the next five years by turning Samarkand into a "Tourism Gate",
- ensuring employment of 40 thousand people in the field of tourism,
- in 2022, the establishment of the Samarkand tourism center, including the "Eternal City" historical complex, and the necessary infrastructure,

- implementation of a special program for the development of ecotourism in the Republic of Karakalpakstan and on the coast of the Aral, in which, wide use of the opportunities of the new airport of Moynaq,

- to adopt a special program for tourism to be the main driving force in the creation of new jobs in Khorezm region,

- implementation of a special program for rapid development of tourism in Bukhara region,

- effective use of pilgrimage and ecotourism potential in Navoi region,

- further improvement of tourism infrastructure in Tashkent city,

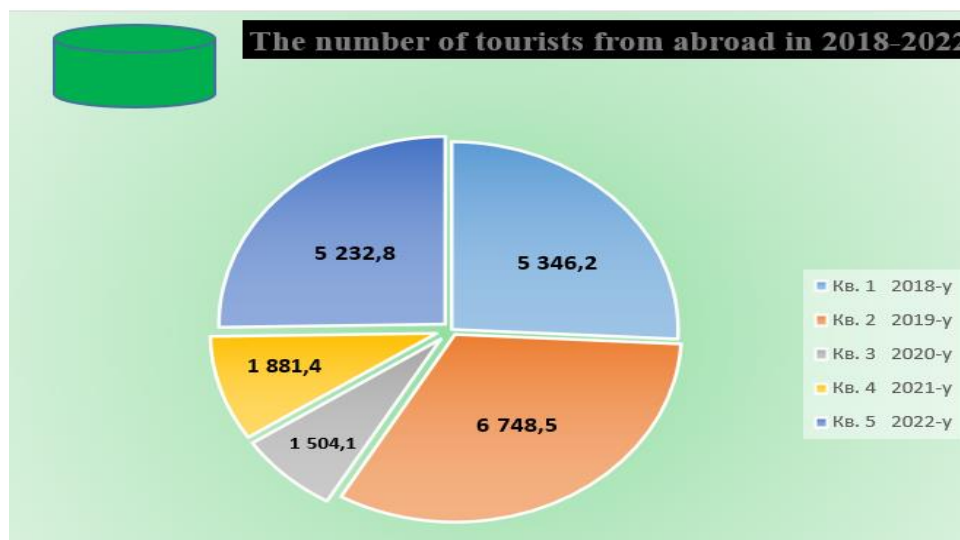
- development of a separate program for bringing the tourism potential to a new level in the Tashkent region and etc. [1;6].

Despite the fact that many measures are being taken to develop the tourism sector, if we look at only ecological tourism in our Republic, we believe that the possibilities of using the potential are not at a satisfactory level. Among the main problems in this regard is insufficient research of ecological resources, the lack of eco-routes that fully reveal the essence of ecological tourism is recognized by many tourists and researchers, we believe that it is appropriate to develop ecological tourism based on the conclusions obtained from these experiences after studying the world experiences of the development of the field.

It should be emphasized that infrastructure and socio-economic development programs in the regions should be developed together with experts and environmental experts who understand the importance of developing the tourism industry. In our republic, the rapid development of all areas of tourism and the creation of an economic and legal environment for ecological tourism are considered a strategic task. Even though our country has enough tourism resources, we have not been able to show enough of it in terms of marketing. This, in turn, shows our shortcomings in terms of marketing.

The number of tourists in Uzbekistan is increasing year by year. In particular, according to the Statistics Agency under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the total number of foreign tourists who came to the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2022 was 5 232.8 thousand people [6; 12]. Compared to 2021, their number has increased by 2.8 times. During 2022, the largest number of tourists came in September-December, 1 710.9 thousand people, which made up 32.7% of their total number. So, we can see that we have problems with tourist arrivals in all months. See table 2.1.

Table 2.1



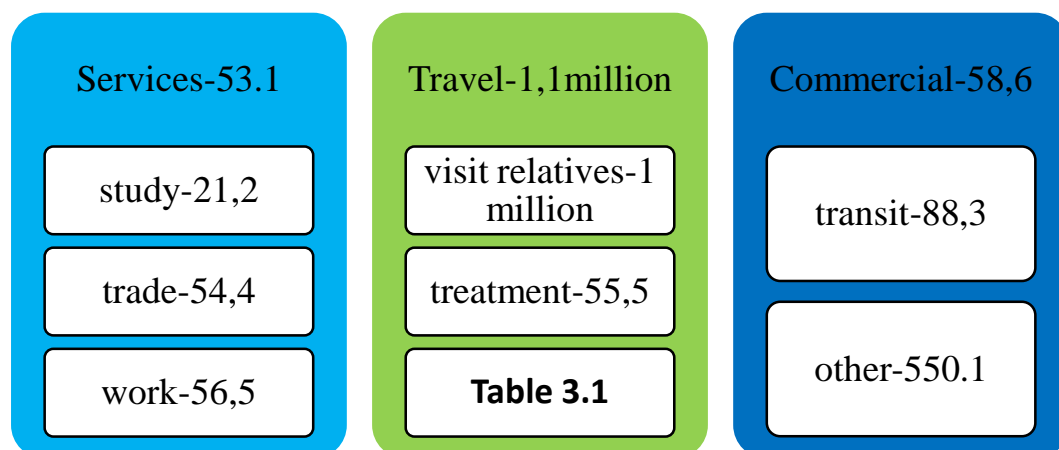
If we analyze the tourists who visited our country in 2018-2023, it can be seen from the analysis of the number of tourists who came to our republic in 2018 that the number of foreign citizens who visited in the last two years increased by 2.3 times. For example, in 2017 this figure was 2.8 million people, and in 2018 it was 5.4 million people. In this indicator, it corresponded to the neighboring countries and the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries. That is, 2456.9 thousand people (38.2 %) from the Republic of Kazakhstan, 1700.7 thousand people (26.4 %) from Tajikistan, 1101.5 thousand people (17.1 %) from Kyrgyzstan, 460.2 thousand people (7.2 %) from Russia visited. From distant foreign countries, 74.8 thousand people (1.2 %) from Turkey, 37.1 thousand people (0.6 %) from China, 32.7 thousand people (0.5 %) from South Korea, 22.2 thousand people (0.3 %) from India, 19.1 thousand people (0.3 %) from Germany, 17.2 thousand people (0.3 %) from Japan came to the country.

If we look at the purpose of this visit, study is 0.2 %, work is 0.6 %, transit is 0.9 %, as a tourist is 71 %, commerce is 0.8 %, treatment is 0.8 %, for other purpose are 6.1 %. If we look at the most visited cities of our republic, Samarkand (31.0 %) and Bukhara (25.6 %) were the next most visited cities after Tashkent (58.0 %). Also, we can see that Khiva (13.3 %), Termiz (6.5 %) and Nukus (4.5 %) are among the most visited places. Our research shows that 39.7 % of the visitors to our country, where visitors from Central Asia are most interested in shopping, were registered as shopping tourists, 31.9 % went on historical trips, 13.7 % went on excursions, and 12.9 % visited museums.

According to statistics, the number of tourists who visited Uzbekistan in 2019 was 6.7 million. Analyzing these statistics, 1 846 000 more tourists visited in 2019 than in 2018. 92.5 % of the tourists who came to our country in 2019 came from CIS countries. 617.6 thousand (or 7.5 %) tourists came from distant foreign countries. (We can see in table 2.1 according to the purpose of tourists who came to Uzbekistan in 2019.)

The COVID-19 pandemic did not bypass our country and had a negative impact on all aspects of the economy. In particular, the extent of the impact on the tourism sector can be seen from the sharp decrease in the number of visitors and the export of tourism services. In January and February 2020, the number of foreign tourists decreased by 90 % on average compared to the corresponding period of the previous year.

The volume of export of tourism services has decreased significantly. Due to the pandemic, 81 % of tour operators and 63 % of accommodation facilities were forced to suspend their activities. The majority of tour operators and accommodation facilities (62 % of tour operators and 74 % of accommodation facilities) were forced to reduce the number of employees due to their circumstances. See table 3.1.



Our research shows that in 2018-2023, the stage of development in the field of tourism in our country will be divided into the 2nd part. They are: a) from 2018 to the time of the pandemic and b) from 2021 to today. As a result of the reforms made in recent years, the tourism sector has become one of the drivers of our economy. As a result of reforms in the field of tourism, the number of countries that do not require visas for foreign citizens has increased from 9 to 100, the "electronic visa" system has been introduced for 77 countries, and citizens of 109 countries have been granted the right to live in the Republic of Uzbekistan. In this year, which is difficult for tourism, subjects in the field are being supported in every way and subsidies are allocated to them. As a result, more than 26 million tourists visited our country in 2018-2023. Only in 2023, the number of foreign tourists to our republic was 6 626 300. Compared to 2022, it has increased by 26.6 %. If we look at the transport service of tourists arriving in 2023, the number of tourists arriving by air transport is 1 116 800 people (16.9 %), those who came by railway – 95 700 people (1.4 %), ones who came by road transport – 28 8000 people (0.4 %). The largest number of tourists, i.e. 5 386 400 people (81.3 %) crossed the border on foot from neighboring countries.

Conclusion: In the analysis of literature, it can be concluded from the results of studies conducted in the field of tourism that the most optimal way to develop tourism in Uzbekistan is first of all to study tourism opportunities at the local level, to develop its scientific basis and to determine the prospect of development.

Based on the subject of research in tourism - taking into account the principles of territoriality, periodicity, and complexity, it is appropriate to visit and develop routes to the cities of Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva along with other types of tourism in the development of tourist excursions, routes and programs.

Since tourism in Uzbekistan is rich in its ancient historical and cultural heritage objects, historical, architectural and pilgrimage tourism is well developed in this region. In the future, as part of these routes, it is possible to increase the flow of local and foreign tourists by creating a tourist infrastructure in the Eco-center area as a specially protected natural area without having a negative impact on the way of life of the animal world.

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