

## Problems of the Development of Tourism and Recreational Services in Uzbekistan in the Context of a Global Pandemic

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### Annotation

The article presents the issues of the impact of the pandemic on the tourism industry of Uzbekistan and provides an analysis of the problems of the development of tourism and recreation services in the Republic, in particular in the Samarkand region, in the new conditions.

**Key words:** pandemic, tourism, tourist and recreational services, recreational complexes, degree of socio-economic development, industry development trends.

### Introduction

The coronavirus pandemic will have a significant impact on the future of tourism. The expected consequences are assessed in different ways: from completely negative scenarios to relatively weighted forecasts [Ayittey et al. 2020; Chohan 2020; Jordà et al. 2020; McKibbin, Fernando 2020].

We see what measures other countries are taking to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. All of this affects the tourism industry. Many countries completely stop air traffic. Already today, tourists have canceled reservations for about 50 thousand rooms in March and April. Already today, judging by canceled bookings, the industry has lost 45-50 thousand tourists from Italy, China, South Korea, Japan, Germany and France. This is estimated to have resulted in a loss of nearly \$ 31 million to the country's economy. This figure is increasing daily.

The seasonal nature of the business, as well as low margins (about 5-15%) have led to the threat of bankruptcy hanging over many companies in the country. And this applies not only to travel organizations, but also to hotels, transport companies serving the sector. According to the forecasts of the State Committee for Tourism, in 2020, the income from tourism services in Uzbekistan should have amounted to more than \$ 1.5 billion.

However, on March 20, due to the spread of the coronavirus, Uzbekistan stopped all air and railway communications, but the decline in tourism began at the end of January. Entrepreneurs are taking real losses. But the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan considers tourism to be a strategic industry. Therefore, the government began to develop measures so that the pandemic would have the least impact on it. Earlier, the Government of the Republic adopted a strategy according to which the target objectives of the tourism development strategy in Uzbekistan until 2030 "...giving tourism the status of a strategic sector of the economy. diversification, restructuring and transformation of the economy into a powerful tool for sustainable development ..." . Fulfillment of these tasks shows the need for in-depth scientific research, which will form the basis for further development of the tourism industry, increasing its share in GDP, in-depth analysis of the tourism and recreation market and the development of relevant programs. In this regard, the relevance of this topic, which is devoted to the study of the scientific basis for the development of tourist and recreational services.

### Literature Review

Theoretical issues of the development of tourism services and its various forms I.Endjeychik, M.A.Zhukova, N.I.Kabushkin, V.A.Kvartalnov, It has been studied in the works of A.D.Chudnovsky, F.Sherer, D.Ross and other foreign scientists [1-7]. KH Abdurahmanov, M.R Boltabaev, M.E Pulatov, N.T Tuxhliev, I.S Tuxhliev, I.Ivatov, M.K Pardaev, Z.D Adilova on the problems of tourism development in modern conditions , F.K.Komilova, B.X.Turaev, D.X.Aslanova, A.F.Saidov, T.T.Tashmurotov, E.V.Golysheva, O.M.Hamidov, A.N.Norchaev, Sh Economists of our country, such as R.Fayzieva,

A.A.Eshtaev, D.K.Usmanova, B.Sh.Safarov, M.T.Alimova, A.K. Alimov have devoted their scientific work [8-27]. The research work of such scientists as V.I Azar, M.B Birjakov, Ya. Gezgali, G.A Karpova, V.A Kvartalnov, devoted to the analysis of tourism and recreation as a specific type of activity is noteworthy [28-38 ].

At present, there is a need to scientifically substantiate the features and trends in the development of tourist and recreational services in Uzbekistan, to change the organizational and economic system that ensures the effective use of the recreational potential of the region. Although these issues are partially reflected in the level of theoretical research and practical solutions, but the theoretical and methodological study of the direct tourist and recreational services and its role in the development of the tourism industry is a topical issue, and research in this area remains a requirement.

### **Methods and Analysis**

Experts point out that the formation of the market for recreational tourism or health services is carried out under the influence of several factors. The main ones are: socio-economic factors (level of socio-economic development of the tourist area, political and financial stability, income growth), recreational and resource potential (natural and man-made factors); the state of tourism infrastructure and ecology of the region; geographical location factor, in particular, the state of satisfaction of tourist demand in relation to the main regions; socio-cultural (increase in working hours, increase in leisure time, change in the mentality of tourists, priorities in the system of spiritual and cultural values, etc.). The combination (implementation) of space and time of this group of factors determines the formation of relatively stable tourist flows. This, in turn, leads to the formation and development of resort areas, which are characterized by the intensity of recreational activities. In general, Uzbekistan has the opportunity to combine the three most important conditions for the development of tourism, namely historical and cultural monuments, natural environment and transport facilities. The tourist attraction of the recreation area is formed mainly due to natural tourist resources, historical and cultural sources, the satisfactory state of the environment, the level of socio-economic development of the region. Although there are enough recreational facilities in Uzbekistan, given the growing population, the influx of foreigners for recreation and treatment, the existing facilities do not meet the needs of all vacationers. According to statistics, in 2019, Uzbekistan was visited by 6748.5 thousand tourists, in 2018 this figure was 5346200 people. 51.3 percent of them are 31-55 years old (52.1 percent in 2018), 20.2 percent are 55 years old and older (19.4 percent in 2018), and 19.5 percent. - 19-30 years old (20.4% in 2018) and 9.1% - individuals aged 0-18 (8.1% in 2018). Including the number of foreigners was 488.4 thousand people. Most of the tourists came from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, the Russian Federation, Turkey, Afghanistan, China, the Republic of Korea and India. Of these, 81.8% visited relatives and friends, and 15.5% came to Uzbekistan for recreation. 2.7% came for treatment, shopping and work. At the end of 2019, the volume of exports of tourism services reached 1313,032 dollars (in 2018 - 1041,089 dollars).

It is known that the market of recreational services as an independent economic system includes a set of economic relations and institutions that determine the activities and relationships of economic entities that provide the production and sale of health and medical services. At the entrance to the system there are tourist and natural-recreational resources, and at the exit there are sanatorium and health services. From a social point of view, the implementation of the activities of the sanatorium-resort complex is associated with treatment, hydro-rehabilitation, recreation of people, the restoration of emotional and intellectual strength.

The nature of Uzbekistan is rich and colorful, and more than 200 healing mineral springs and mud sources have been identified in different parts of the country. Groundwater is diverse in terms of chemical composition, natural-biological and other properties. On the basis of these sources, physiotherapeutic

hospitals, sanatoriums and other health facilities have been established. Among them, such resorts as "Chimgan", "Chartak", "Shohimardon" and others are of world importance. In general, today in the country there are special sanatoriums, prophylactics, rest homes, which serve more than 76,456 people.

**Table 1**  
**Number of people staying in hotels and similar accommodation facilities in 2018 by purpose of travel to Uzbekistan and regions (person)**

Republic of Uzbekistan regions	person	Including by purpose			
		Rest and treatment	Job and career goals	Therapeutic healing treatments	Other purposes
	<b>1193324</b>	<b>243874</b>	<b>551851</b>	<b>35032</b>	<b>362567</b>
The Republic of Karakalpakstan	31259	1209	23045	59	6946
Andijan region	46621	811	30251	627	14932
Bukhara region	65160	30890	20417	314	13539
Jizzakh region	33151	2767	24708	108	5568
Kashkadarya region	75236	8544	61600	14	5078
Navoi region	45846	1105	37769	210	6762
Namangan region	47017	10051	21050	2539	13377
Samarkand region	83525	30846	18945	2731	31003
Surkhandarya region	57491	2708	45103	1291	8389
Syrdarya region	12767	-	7135	78	5554
Tashkent region	76299	27896	25905	3062	19436
Fergana region	49740	2109	27152	640	19839
Khorezm region	44219	17639	17714	-	8866
Tashkent. sh.	524993	107299	191057	1728	224909

Source: Based on data from the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

In determining the trends in the development of tourist and recreational services, an analysis of the purpose of travel to Uzbekistan through hotels and other accommodation facilities was conducted. According to him. In 2018, the total number of Uzbek citizens was 1,193,324, of which 46.4% were for business and professional purposes, 20.43% for leisure, direct treatment and so on.

Currently, there are 111 hotels in the Samarkand region with a total of 2156 rooms and a total of 4374 beds, which is 16.4% of the total number of hotels in the country.

91% of the bed capacity of the Samarkand region is concentrated in the city of Samarkand, which indicates the underdevelopment of the infrastructure for accommodation in the regions. Although the areas have the potential for the development of health, recreational, ecotourism, pilgrimage, sports, active types of tourism. Also in the region there are 28 sanatoriums and 8 recreation centers (campgrounds and recreation centers). Positive trends in the sphere show that in 2005-2018 the number of services provided by sanatoriums of the Samarkand region increased by 2.8 times. However, only Samarkand region provides 4.97% of the total volume of services (42.5% share of Tashkent region, 20% share of Fergana region and 13.6% share of Namangan region). In addition, the fact that these organizations do not specialize in foreign tourists, as well as a 72.7% decline in the number of visitors provided by recreational organizations over the same period, indicates a problem in the industry. Analysis of the tourism industry of the Samarkand region for the creation of a tourist free tourist zone and recreational clusters allows us to conclude that certain preconditions have developed in the region that make it necessary to form them.

1. Developed regulatory framework.
2. Availability of potential for tourism development:

- a) favorable natural and geographical conditions
- b) cultural and historical background.
- c) the presence of folk arts and crafts and arts and crafts centers "Hunarmand".

The main task of these organizations is to restore forgotten crafts, to assist artisans in the production and sale of products. Samarkand paper, which is produced at the "Meros" factory, silk carpets, which are produced at the "Khujum" factory

r) the presence of ecologically clean natural zones on the territory of the region.

3. High scientific and educational potential.

4. Availability of tourist infrastructure.

5. Growing interest in tourist areas, both from foreign tourists and national ones.

However, despite a number of positive trends, the development of the tourism sector is constrained by the unresolved issues of the following:

1. Insufficient level of development of tourist infrastructure.
2. Inconsistency of the level of training and professionalism of personnel serving tourists, modern requirements. The tourism industry is characterized by a significant number of entrepreneurial structures with a small number of employees (5 - 8). Such enterprises do not seek to spend money on training specialists. And the lack of practical and theoretical knowledge, the low level of preparedness of personnel involved in the field of tourism negatively affect the tourist flow.
3. Lack of communication between tourist destinations, and as a result, the impossibility of forming combined tour packages designed for a long vacation. Due to the long distances, tourists are simply physically unable to visit several places. This indicates the need to form a single regional tourist cluster, which will allow establishing cooperation between the regions of the region and creating combined tours.
4. Low quality and monotony of the tourist product. Most travel agencies offer tours of the same type, differing only in the objects of display. It is difficult to find activities for the whole family or alternative leisure opportunities in the event of changing weather conditions and other circumstances.
5. Lack of clear positioning of tourist sites in the region. As a result, there is a lack of information for potential tourists about the uniqueness of tourist sites, about a favorable ecological situation, about the possibilities of recreation in the region, etc.

A necessary condition for the development of recreational resources and the development of the tourist cluster is the availability of modern tourist infrastructure. Its peculiarity is that it serves tourists and the local population, therefore its development contributes to the tourist development of the territory, improves the living conditions of the residents of the area. In addition, the tourist infrastructure creates a large number of jobs.

Thus, infrastructural problems become the main reason for the decrease in the competitive advantages of the Samarkand region in the market of tourist services, one of which is the problems of transport infrastructure, namely: the quality of the transport services provided does not correspond to the needs of tourists, the inconsistency of the road network with the needs of traffic, both in terms of throughput and technical condition; high tariffs of transport companies; lack of highly qualified specialists in all sectors of the transport system, etc. In addition, among the problems of the information and communication infrastructure of tourism, the following can be distinguished:

- backwardness of technical and technological equipment and the lack of the required amount of modern telecommunication technologies and informatization means;
- insufficient investment in the industry, which hinders the development of information and communication infrastructure;
- the lack of a system for popularizing the use of information technology among the enterprises of the tourism industry, which causes insufficient information support for tourism activities; lack of Internet sites for most of the subjects of tourism activities;

- insufficient number of tourist information centers; non-prevalence of online booking and reservation of tourist services, online stores;
- insufficient use of interactive technologies (virtual tours on Internet portals, maps, information stands);
- lack of a unified PR strategy for promoting the tourist product of the Samarkand region; non-proliferation of geoinformation technologies in the tourism of the region;
- lack of information signs (including in foreign languages), etc.

The main problems of the development of travel rating, affecting the promotion of the tourist product of the Samarkand region, are:

- the prevalence of proactive travel rating over receptive, which does not contribute to the promotion of the tourist product of the Samarkand region;
- diversified offer of services (poorly developed software touring);
- lack of professionalism and qualified knowledge among workers in the tourism sector;
- tour operators practically do not develop new routes; seasonality problems in tourism.

So, in the development of this area, the following problems can be distinguished:

- for the majority of enterprises, the problem remains that the services provided do not meet modern international service standards;
- the minimum number of objects of year-round use in the region, which gives rise to the problem of seasonality;
- today most of the enterprises have great moral and physical wear of communications, property complex;
- lack of the necessary infrastructure to provide recreational recreation (walking paths, bike trails, roller skates, beach facilities); insufficient information equipment of the territories (lack of loud-speaking communications, information stands and signs, including those in foreign languages) on the territory of museums.

– Currently, the Government of the Republic, together with representatives of the country's tourism industry, are resolving issues related to the impact of the pandemic on tourism development in the republic. We have proposed a number of measures to help the tourist industry avoid the crisis.

In this regard, a presidential decree was adopted, which states that entrepreneurs engaged in tourism and hotel activities are exempted from paying land tax and property tax until the end of this year. For them, the social tax rate is reduced from the current 12% to 1%. Thanks to all this, more than 130 billion soums will remain at their disposal.

In addition, a government decree is expected to be adopted to reduce the negative impact of the pandemic on the tourism sector in the country. The Government of Uzbekistan provides for the allocation of subsidies for the development of new tourism products, financing of start-up projects in the field of tourism, support for IT solutions that create convenience for tourists, promotion of the country's tourism potential abroad, and more.

In particular, the document proposes: the allocation of compensation to entrepreneurs for the repair or renovation of a hotel in order to upgrade the category (stars) in the amount of 5 million soums for each room in three-star hotels, 10 million - with a 4-star category and 15 million - 5 stars;

- allocation of grants in the amount of 30% (but not more than 100 million soums) from a project to create thematic food outlets specializing in foreign cuisine, as well as the development of delivery services for food, products and souvenirs;
- compensation by July 1 of part of the expenses of tour operators and guides for the creation of a new object of visit in the amount of 10 million soums;
- the introduction of actions aimed at electronic booking of tours within the country, the preservation of the planned trip to Uzbekistan by foreign tourists after the pandemic; exemption until 2021 of transport

companies serving the sector from paying state fees a license card; allocation of an interest-free loan for up to 1 year in the amount of 50 million soums to travel companies affected by the pandemic, and 5 BRVs per bed for hotels.

### **Conclusion/Recommendations**

Studies have shown that in order to mitigate the consequences of a pandemic, in our opinion, it is necessary:

- In connection with the pandemic, it is necessary to develop domestic recreational tourism. Internal flows should compensate for the absence of foreign tourists. Investors have invested heavily in the construction of hotels, and they should not be idle. It is necessary to subsidize travel within the country if a tourist travels from one region to another;
- The state should provide assistance to tourist and commercial enterprises in order to mitigate the consequences of the crisis, given that the subsidies should be during quarantine. They pursue a social purpose, affirming support for the continuous operation of enterprises and institutions and, therefore, the jobs of workers;
- Travel companies should prepare tourism offers in markets that are adequate and beneficial for domestic tourism;
- Facilitate the travel and movement of foreign tourists and travel by establishing systems of identification and control of tourists at the borders, as well as ensuring their safety during the trip.

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